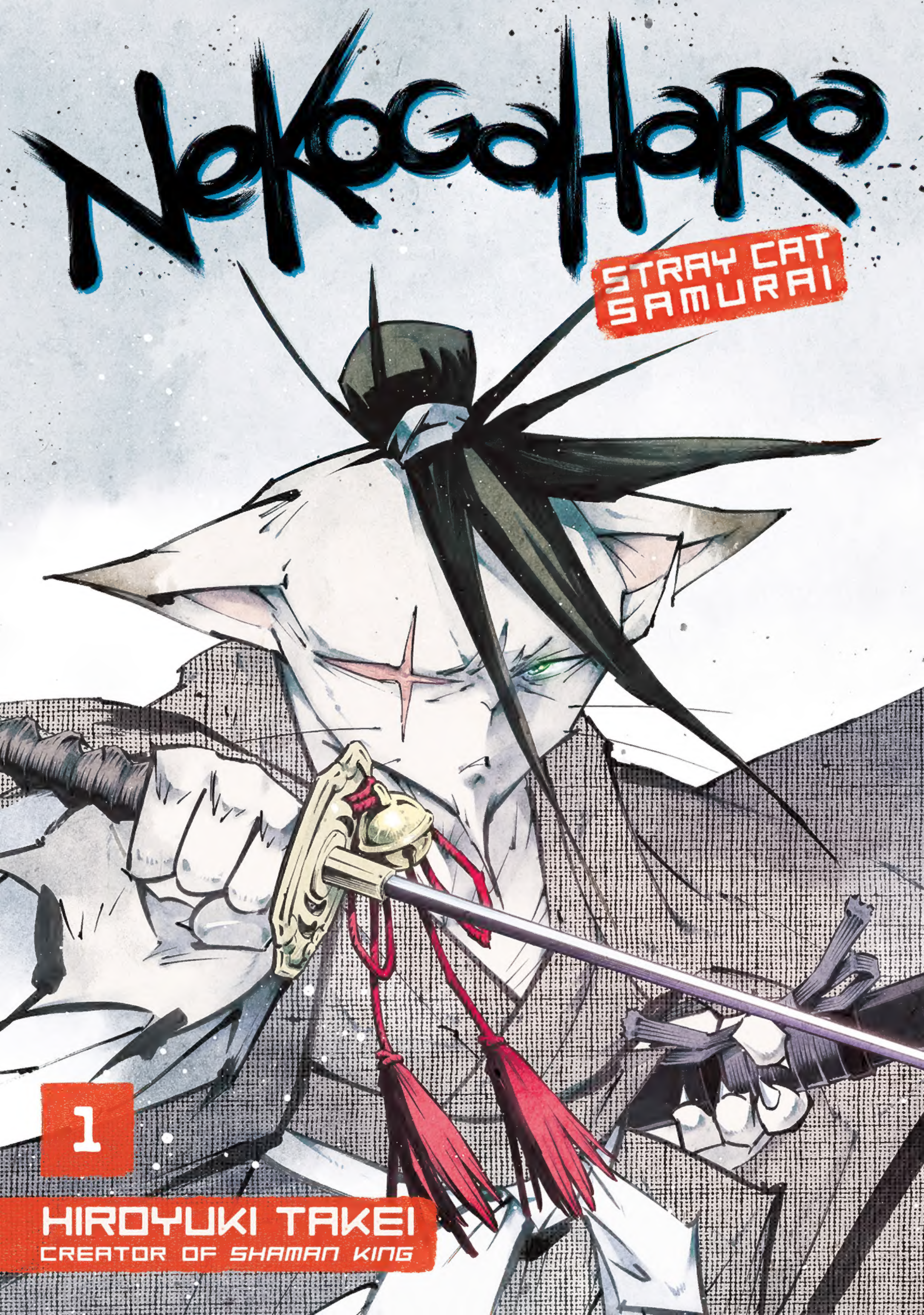


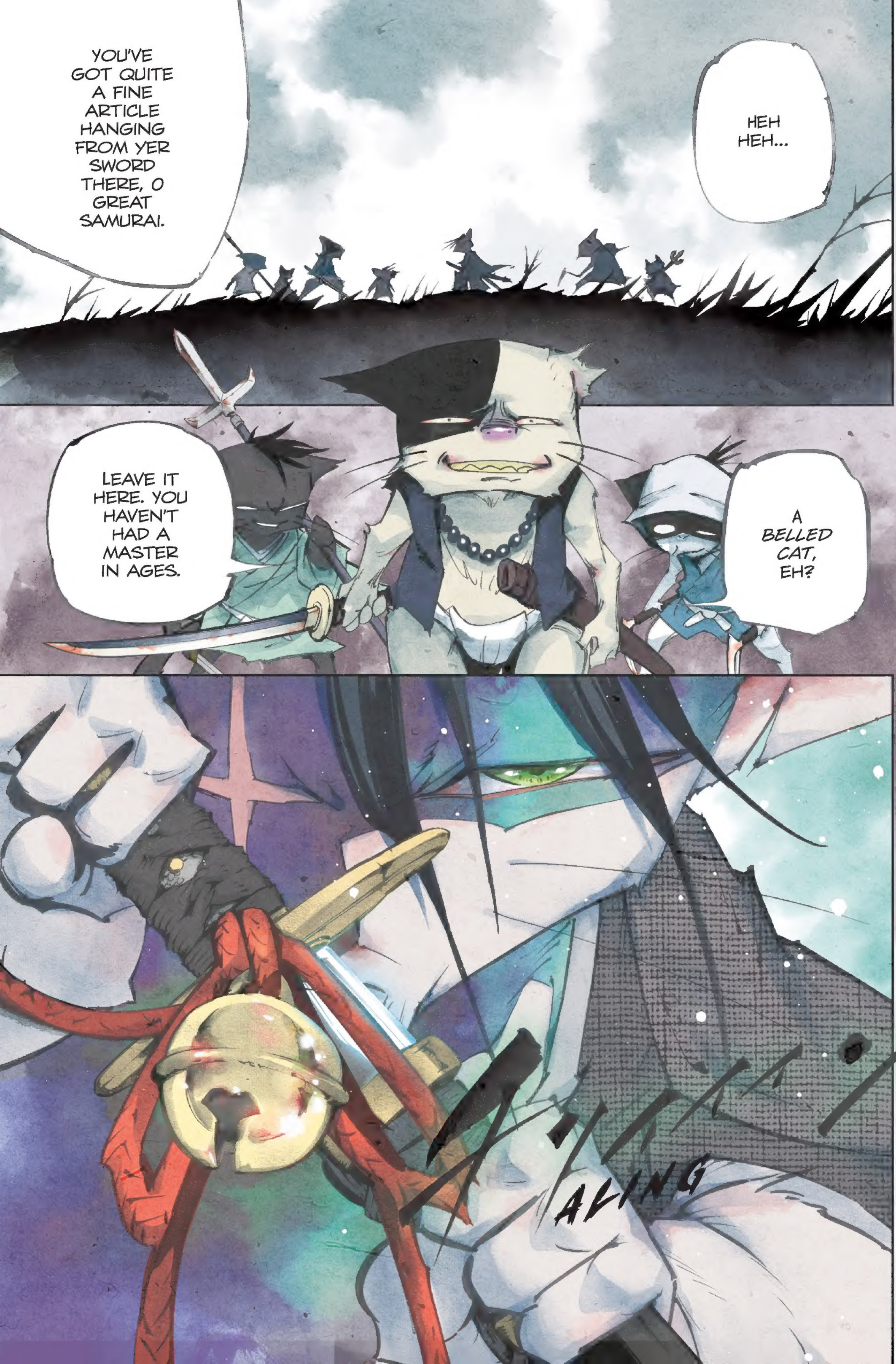
NEKOGAHARA

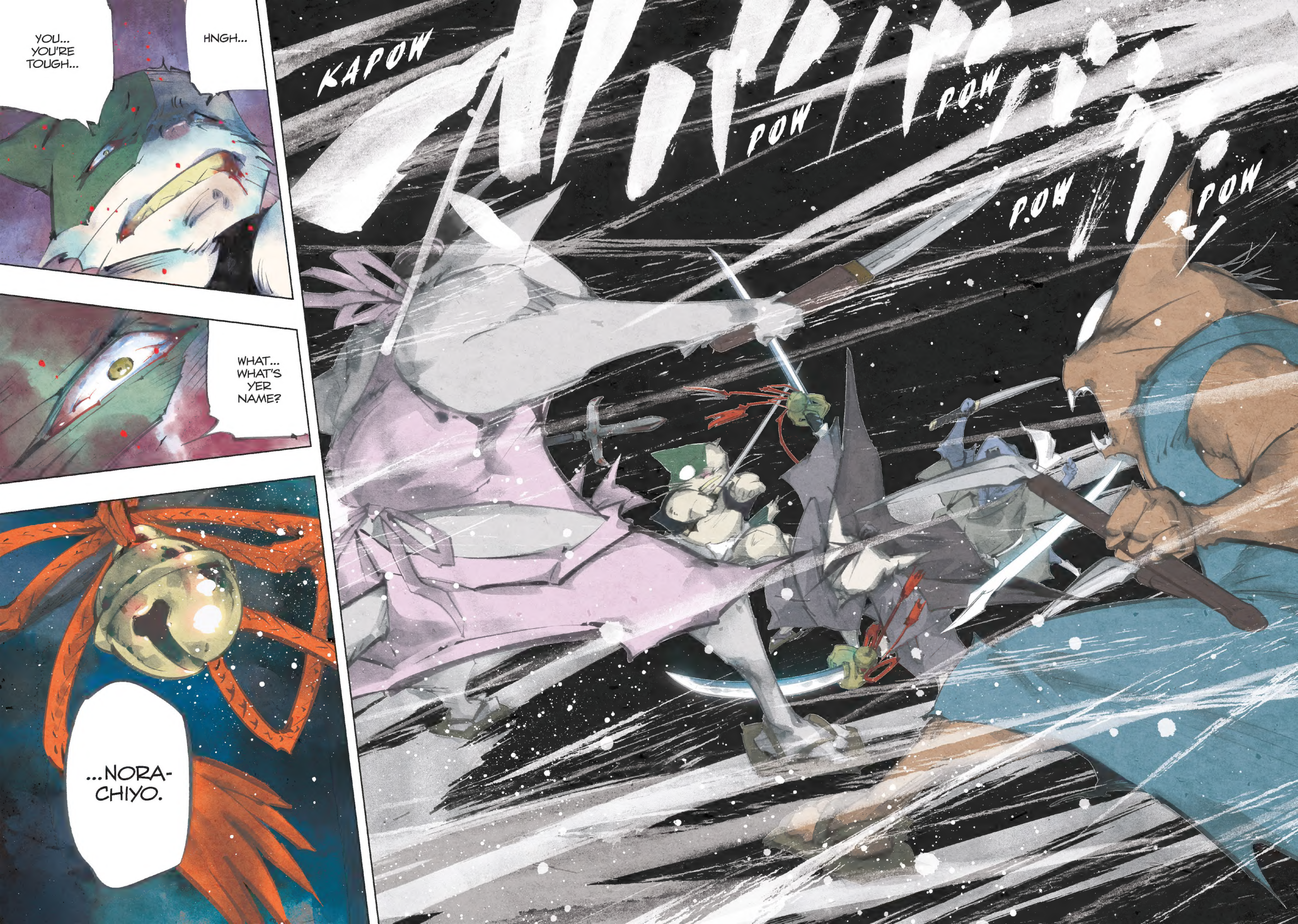
STRAY CAT SAMURAI

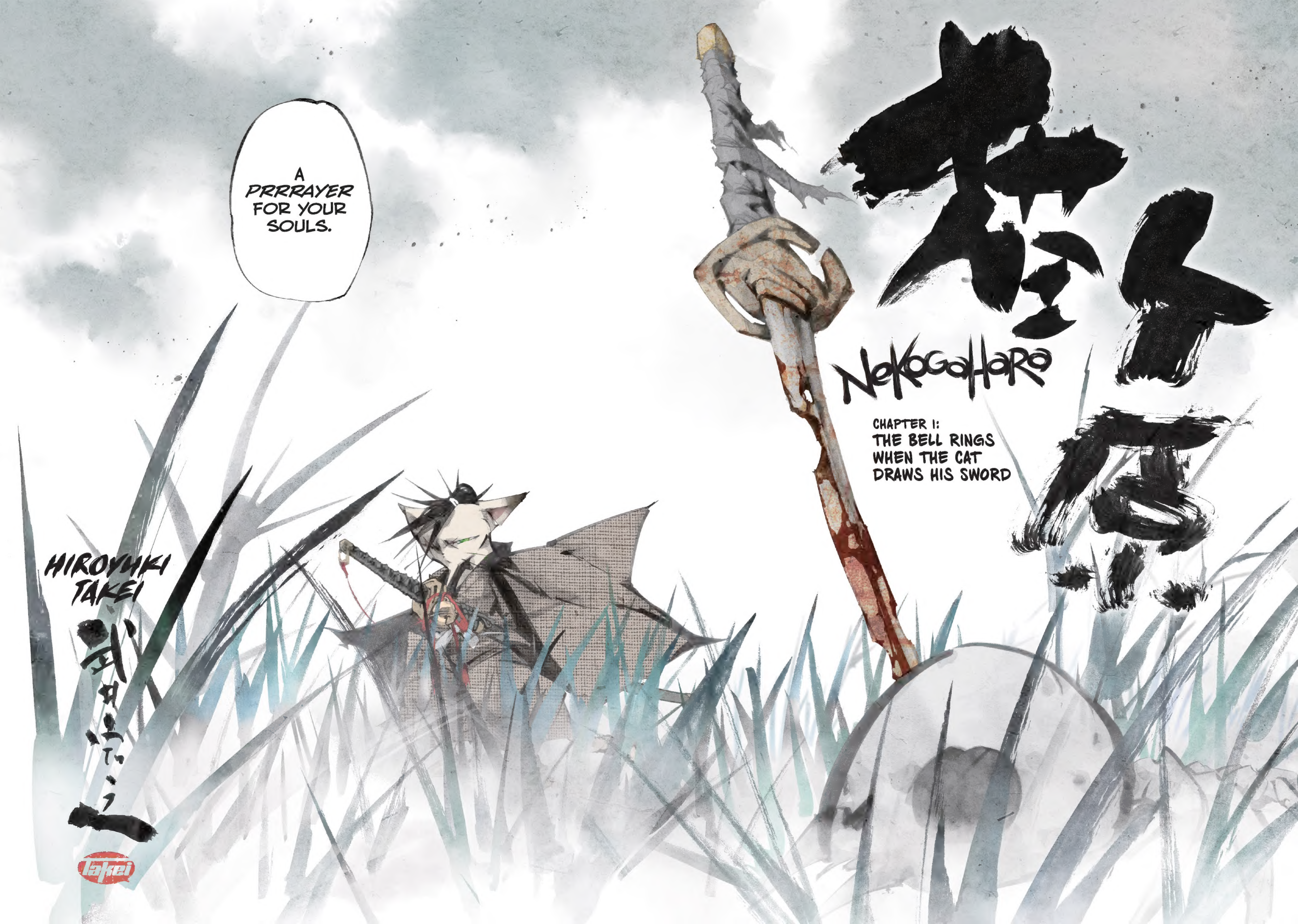
1

HIROYUKI TAKEI

CREATOR OF *SHAMAN KING*


YOU'VE GOT QUITE A FINE ARTICLE HANGING FROM YER SWORD THERE, O GREAT SAMURAI.
HEH HEH...
LEAVE IT HERE. YOU HAVEN'T HAD A MASTER IN AGES.
A *BELLED* CAT, EH?
ALING


YOU... YOU'RE TOUGH...
HNGH...
WHAT... WHAT'S YER NAME?
...NORA-CHIYO.
KAPOW
POW
POW
POW
POW



猫ヶ原
A PRRRAYER FOR YOUR SOULS.
takei

NEKOGAHARA

CHAPTER 1: THE BELL RINGS WHEN THE CAT DRAWS HIS SWORD

HIROYUKI TAKEI

NEKOGAHARA VOLUME ONE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: THE BELL RINGS WHEN THE CAT DRAWS HIS SWORD PAGE 1
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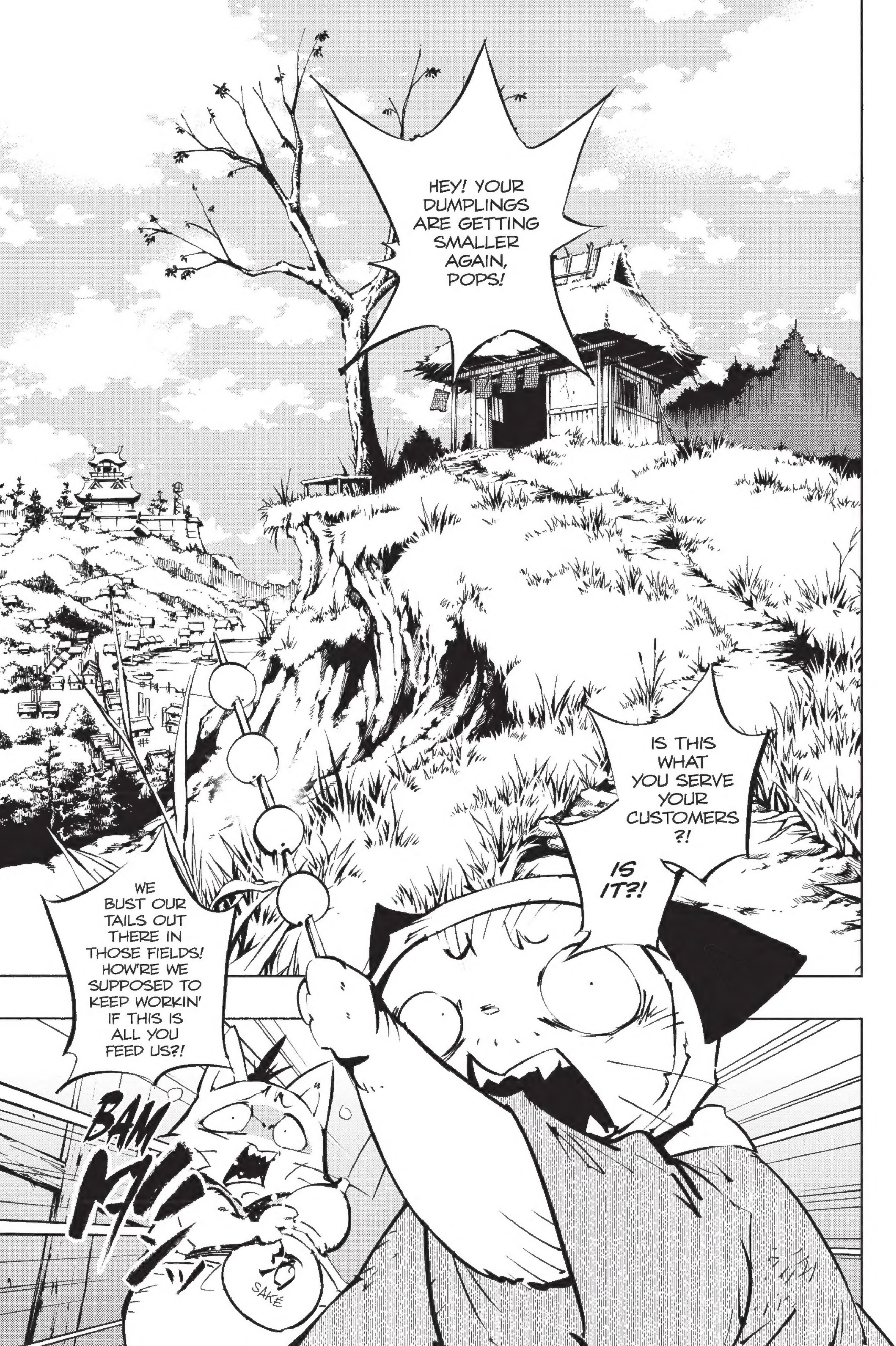
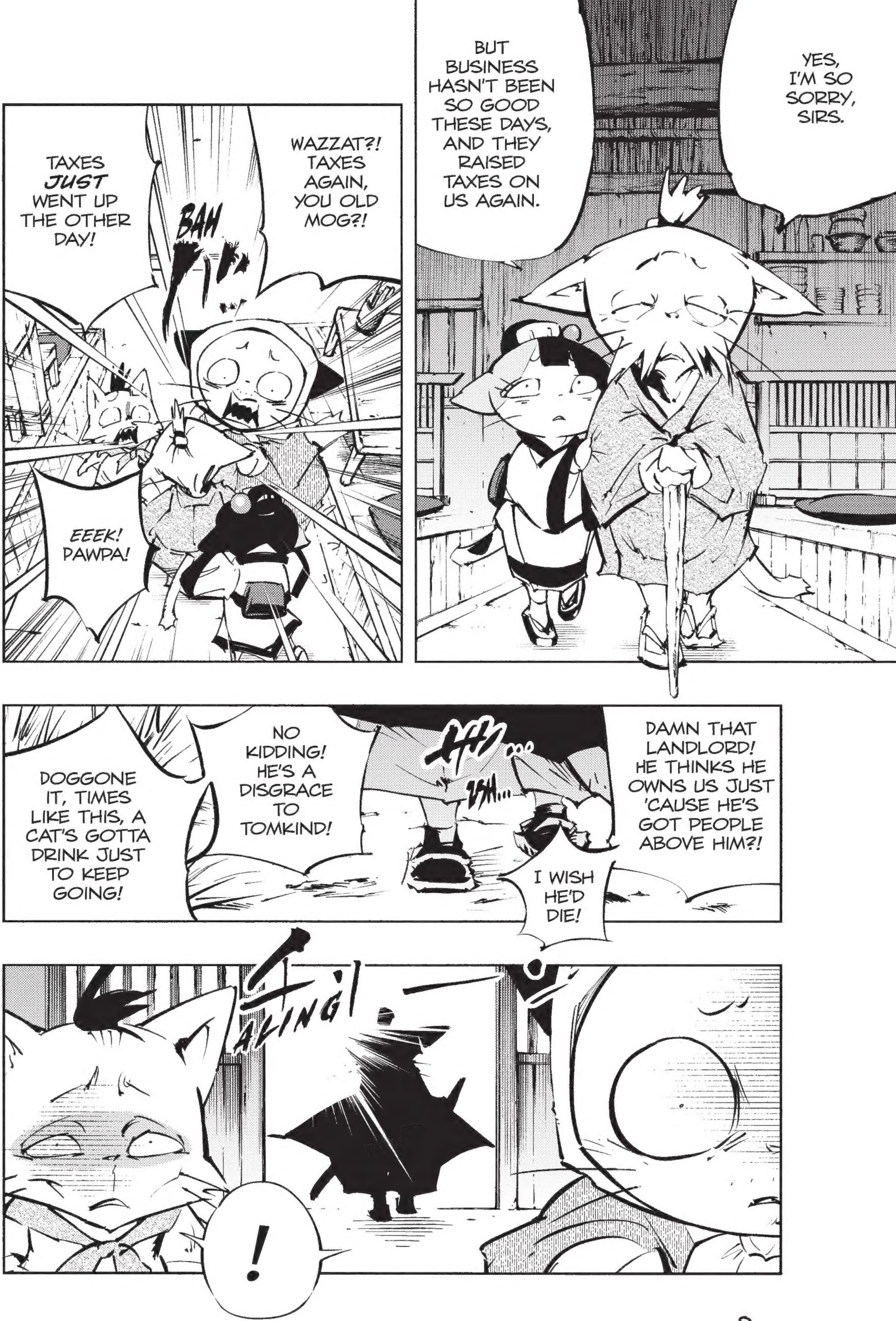
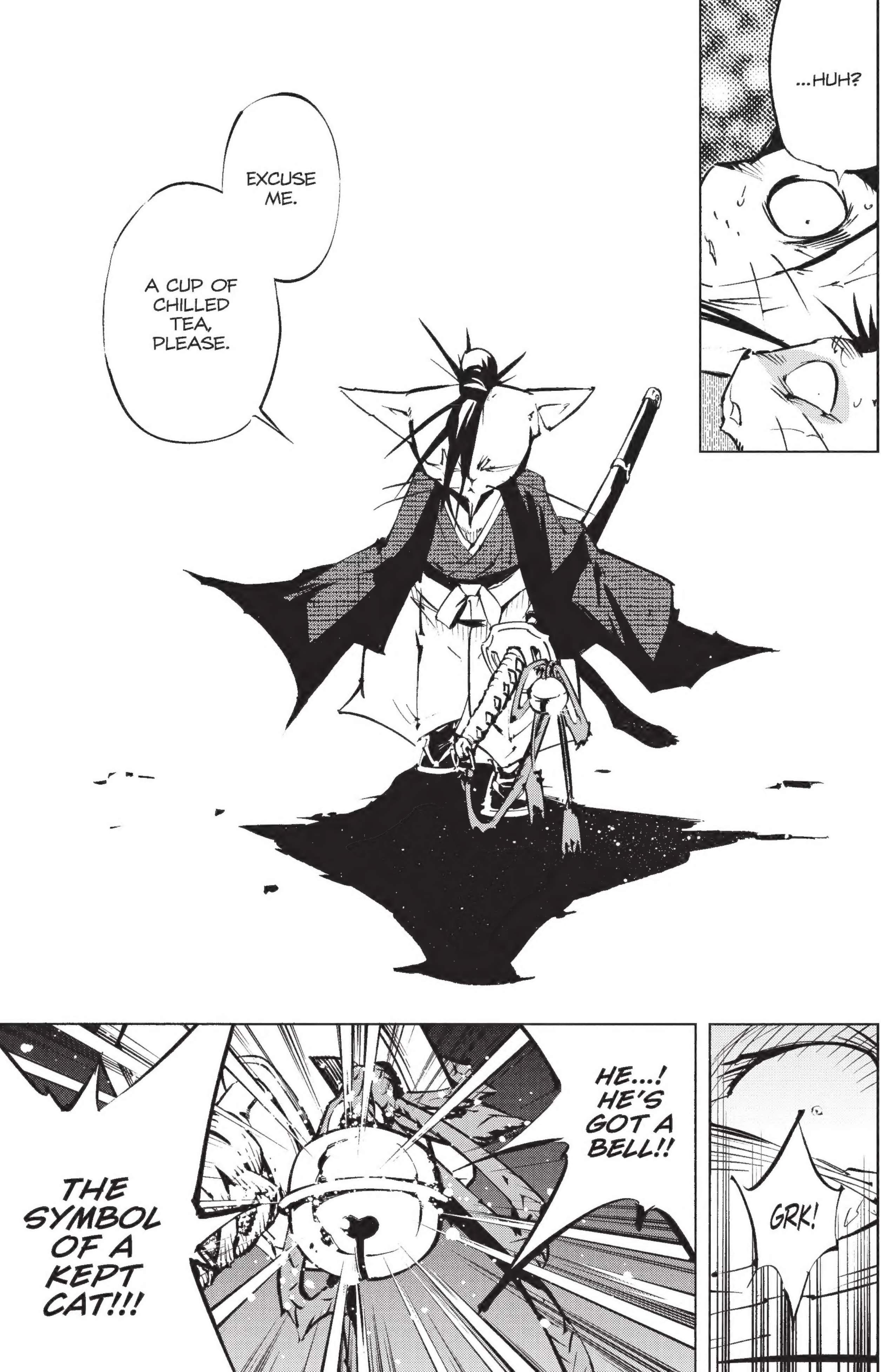
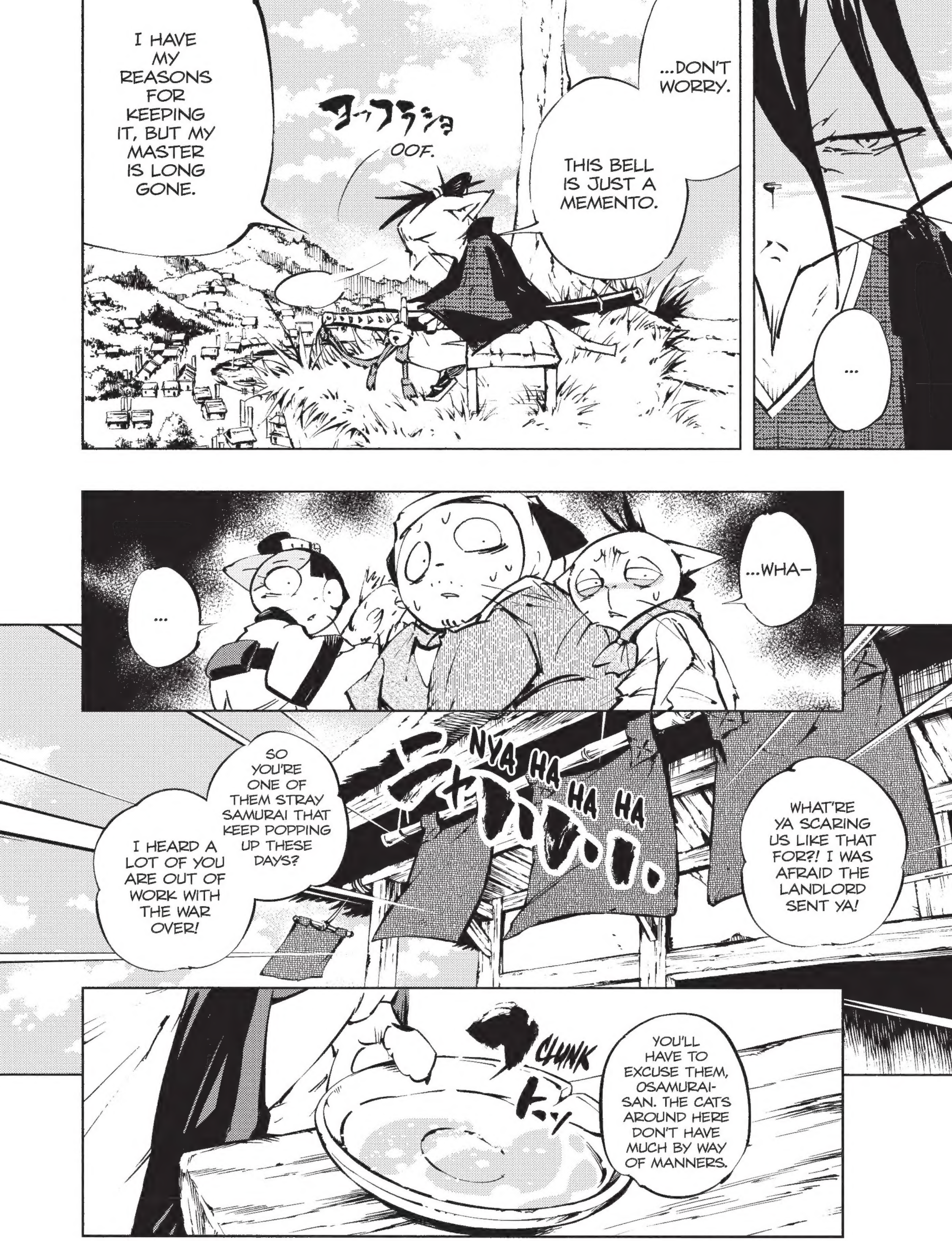
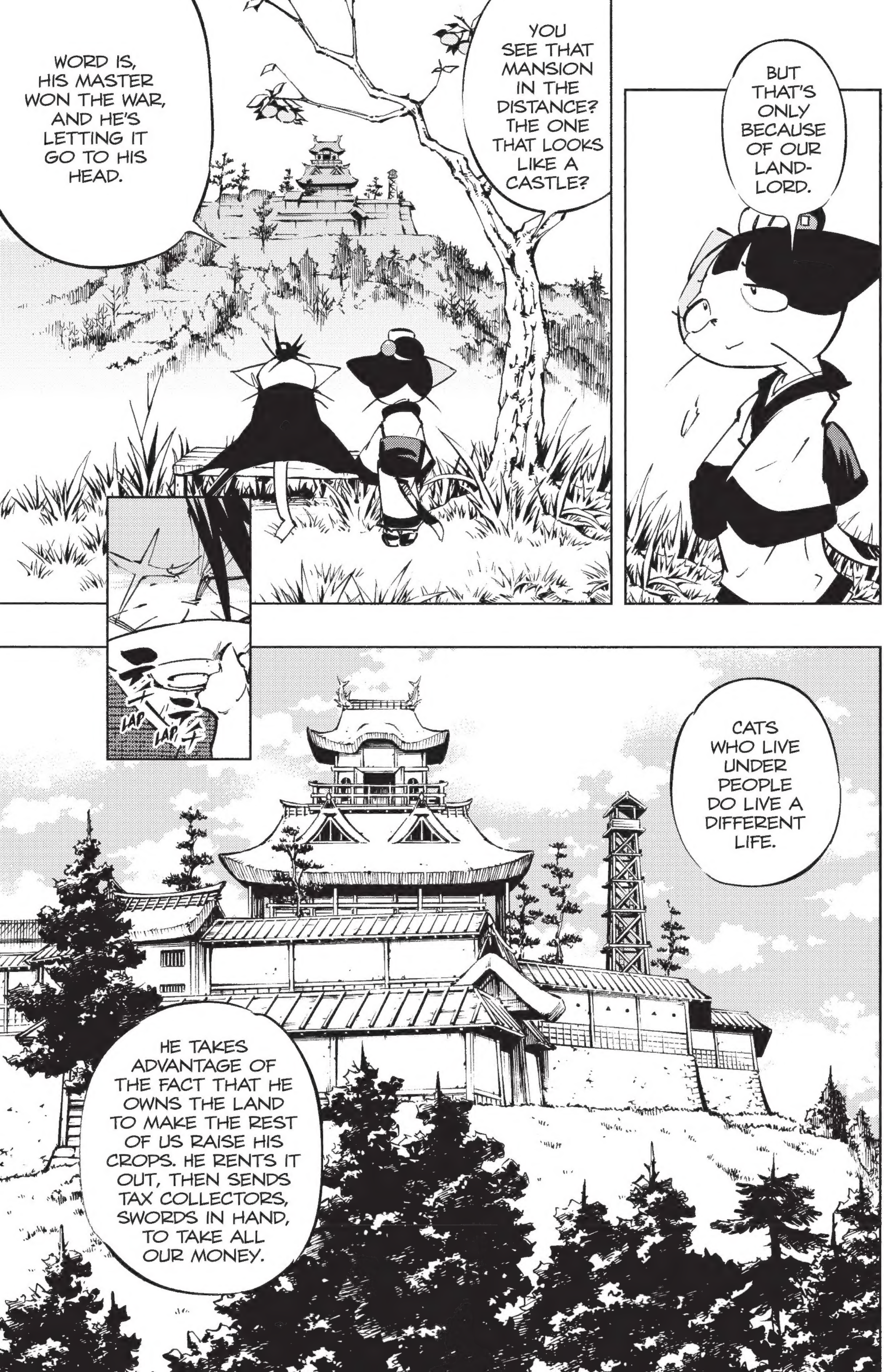
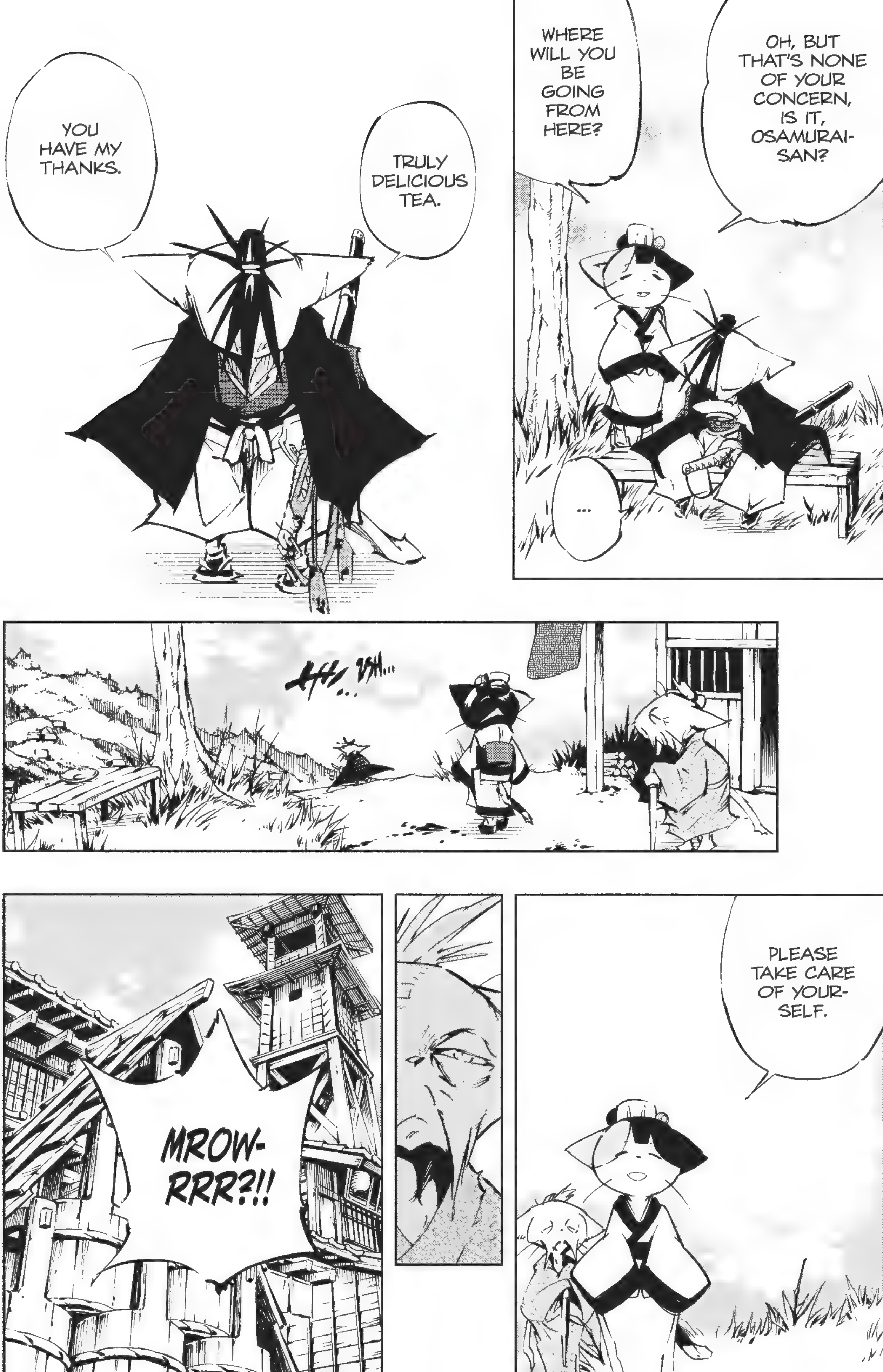

HEY! YOUR DUMPLINGS ARE GETTING SMALLER AGAIN, POPS!
IS THIS WHAT YOU SERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS ?!
IS IT?!
WE BUST OUR TAILS OUT THERE IN THOSE FIELDS! HOW'RE WE SUPPOSED TO KEEP WORKIN' IF THIS IS ALL YOU FEED US?!
BAM M!!
SAKÉ

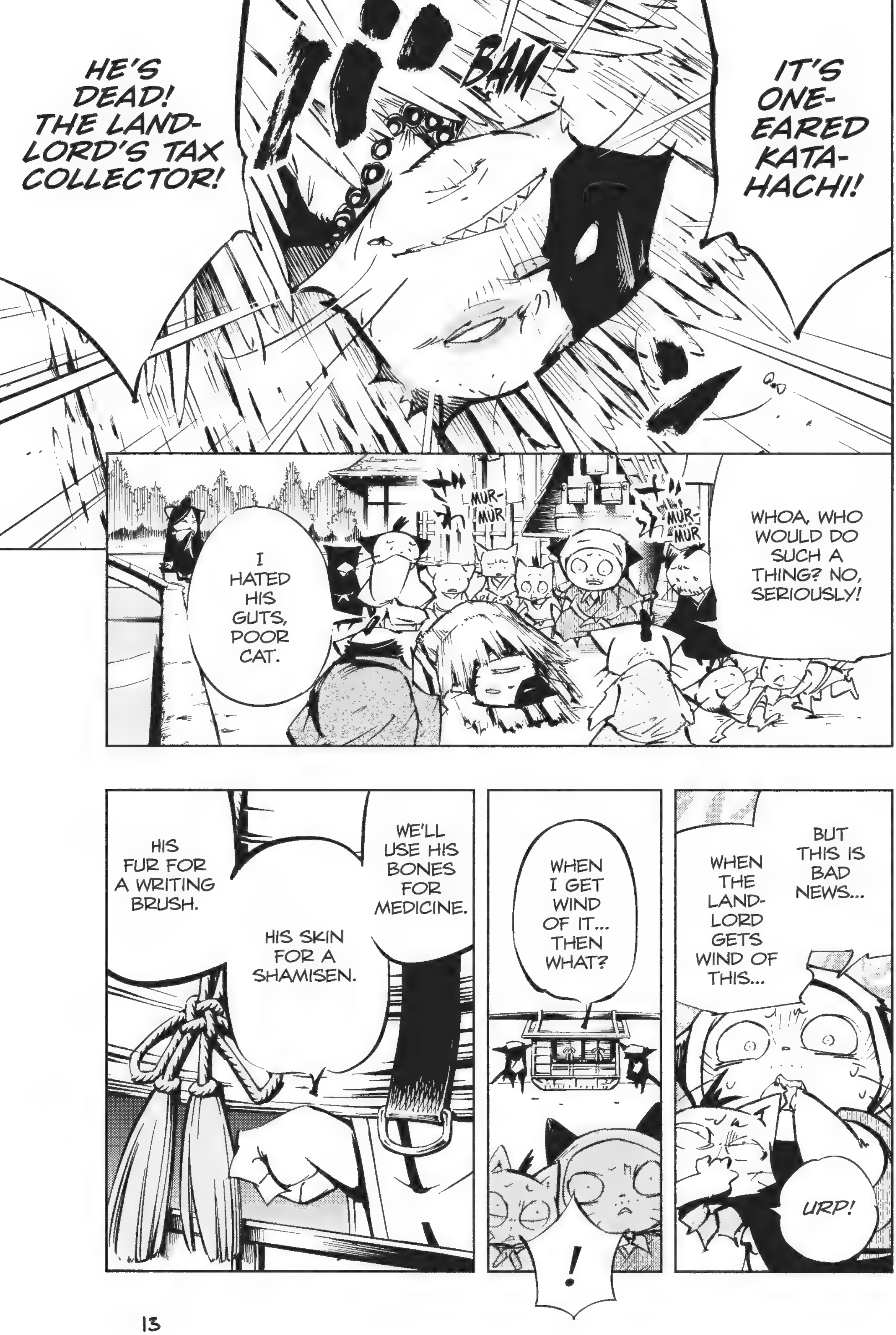

YES, I'M SO SORRY, SIRS.
BUT BUSINESS HASN'T BEEN SO GOOD THESE DAYS, AND THEY RAISED TAXES ON US AGAIN.
WAZZAT?! TAXES AGAIN, YOU OLD MOG?!
BAM
TAXES JUST WENT UP THE OTHER DAY!
EEEK! PAWPA!
DAMN THAT LANDLORD! HE THINKS HE OWNS US JUST 'CAUSE HE'S GOT PEOPLE ABOVE HIM?!
I WISH HE'D DIE!
SHH...
ZSH...
NO KIDDING! HE'S A DISGRACE TO TOMKIND!
DOGGONE IT, TIMES LIKE THIS, A CAT'S GOTTA DRINK JUST TO KEEP GOING!
FAKING!
!

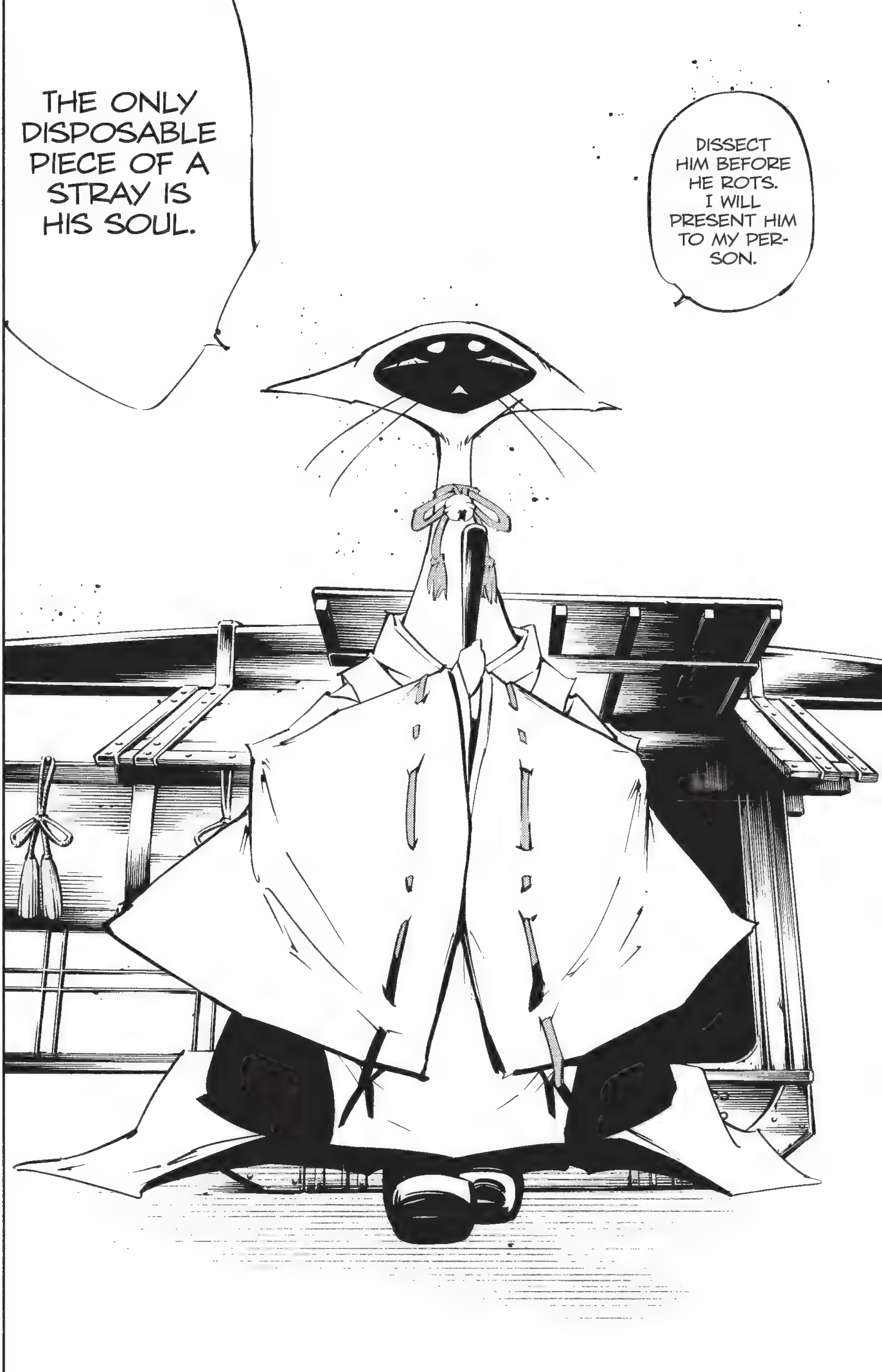

...HUH?
EXCUSE ME.
A CUP OF CHILLED TEA, PLEASE.
GRK!
HE...! HE'S GOT A BELL!!
THE SYMBOL OF A KEPT CAT!!!

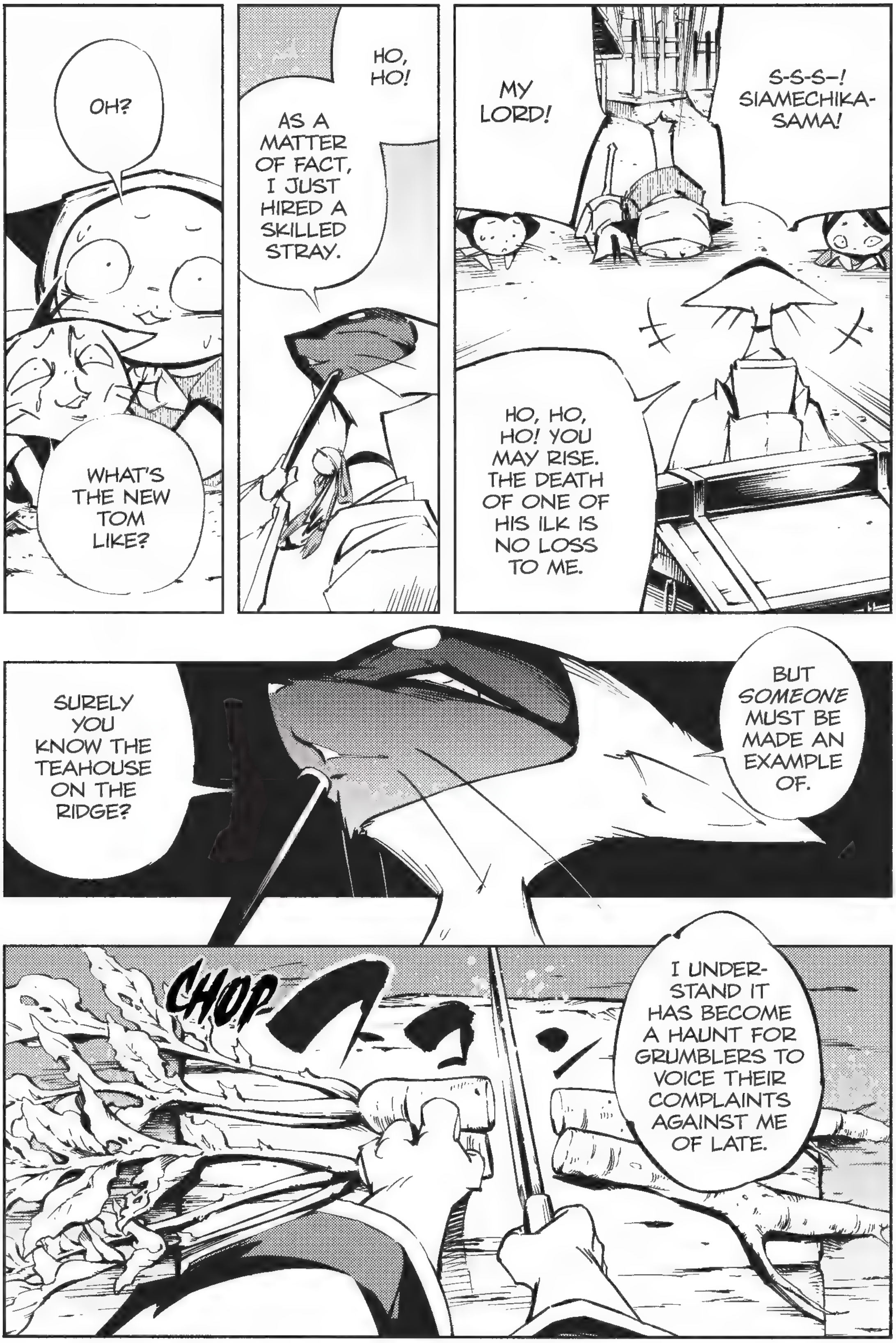

...
...DON'T WORRY.
THIS BELL IS JUST A MEMENTO.
I HAVE MY REASONS FOR KEEPING IT, BUT MY MASTER IS LONG GONE.
ヨッコラショ
OOF.
...WHA-
...
WHAT'RE YA SCARING US LIKE THAT FOR?! I WAS AFRAID THE LANDLORD SENT YA!
NYA HA HA HA
SO YOU'RE ONE OF THEM STRAY SAMURAI THAT KEEP POPPING UP THESE DAYS?
I HEARD A LOT OF YOU ARE OUT OF WORK WITH THE WAR OVER!
CLUNK
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE THEM, OSAMURAI-SAN. THE CATS AROUND HERE DON'T HAVE MUCH BY WAY OF MANNERS.

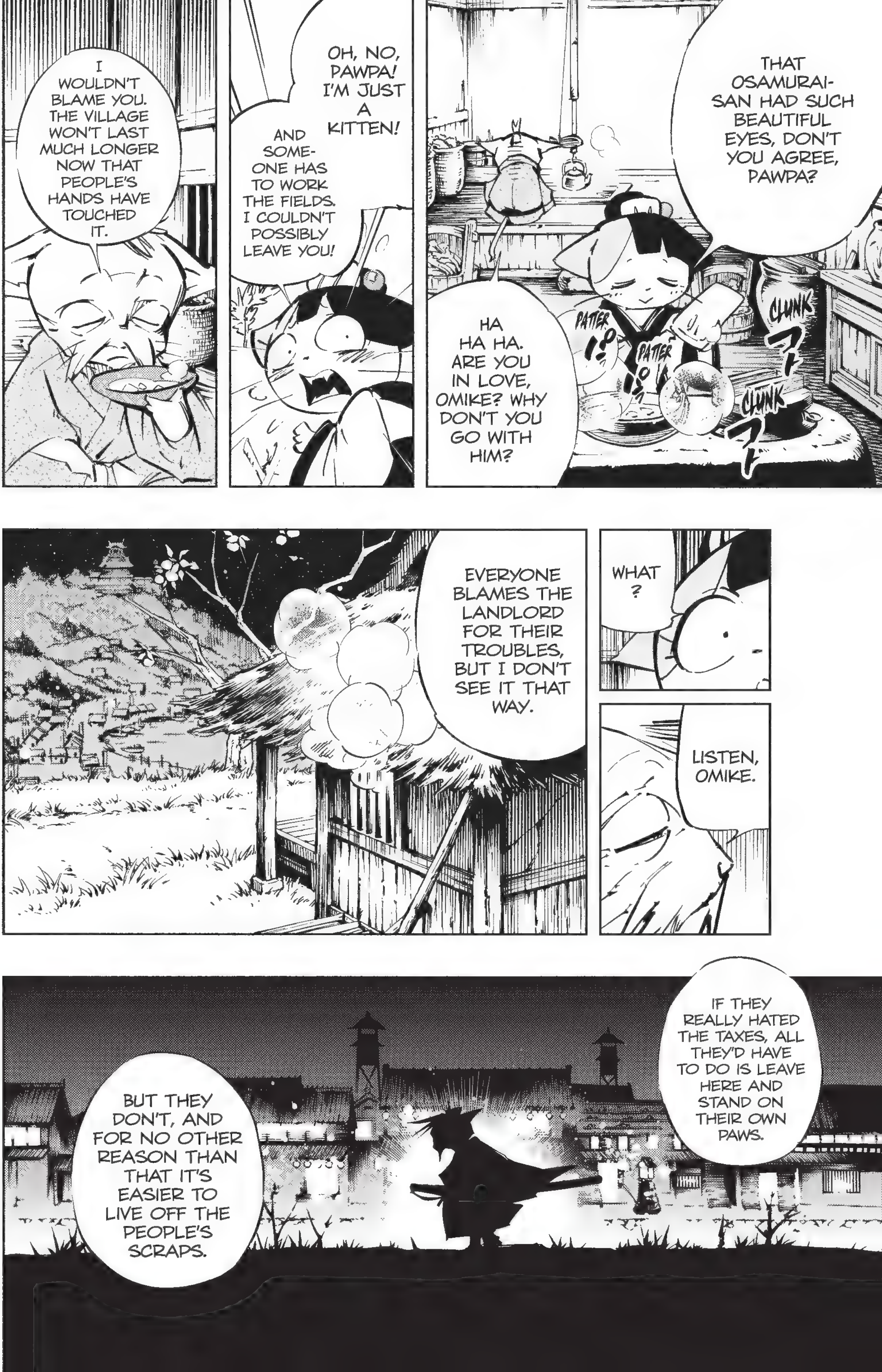

YOU SEE THAT MANSION IN THE DISTANCE? THE ONE THAT LOOKS LIKE A CASTLE?
WORD IS, HIS MASTER WON THE WAR, AND HE'S LETTING IT GO TO HIS HEAD.
LAP LAP
BUT THAT'S ONLY BECAUSE OF OUR LANDLORD.
CATS WHO LIVE UNDER PEOPLE DO LIVE A DIFFERENT LIFE.
HE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT HE OWNS THE LAND TO MAKE THE REST OF US RAISE HIS CROPS. HE RENTS IT OUT, THEN SENDS TAX COLLECTORS, SWORDS IN HAND, TO TAKE ALL OUR MONEY.

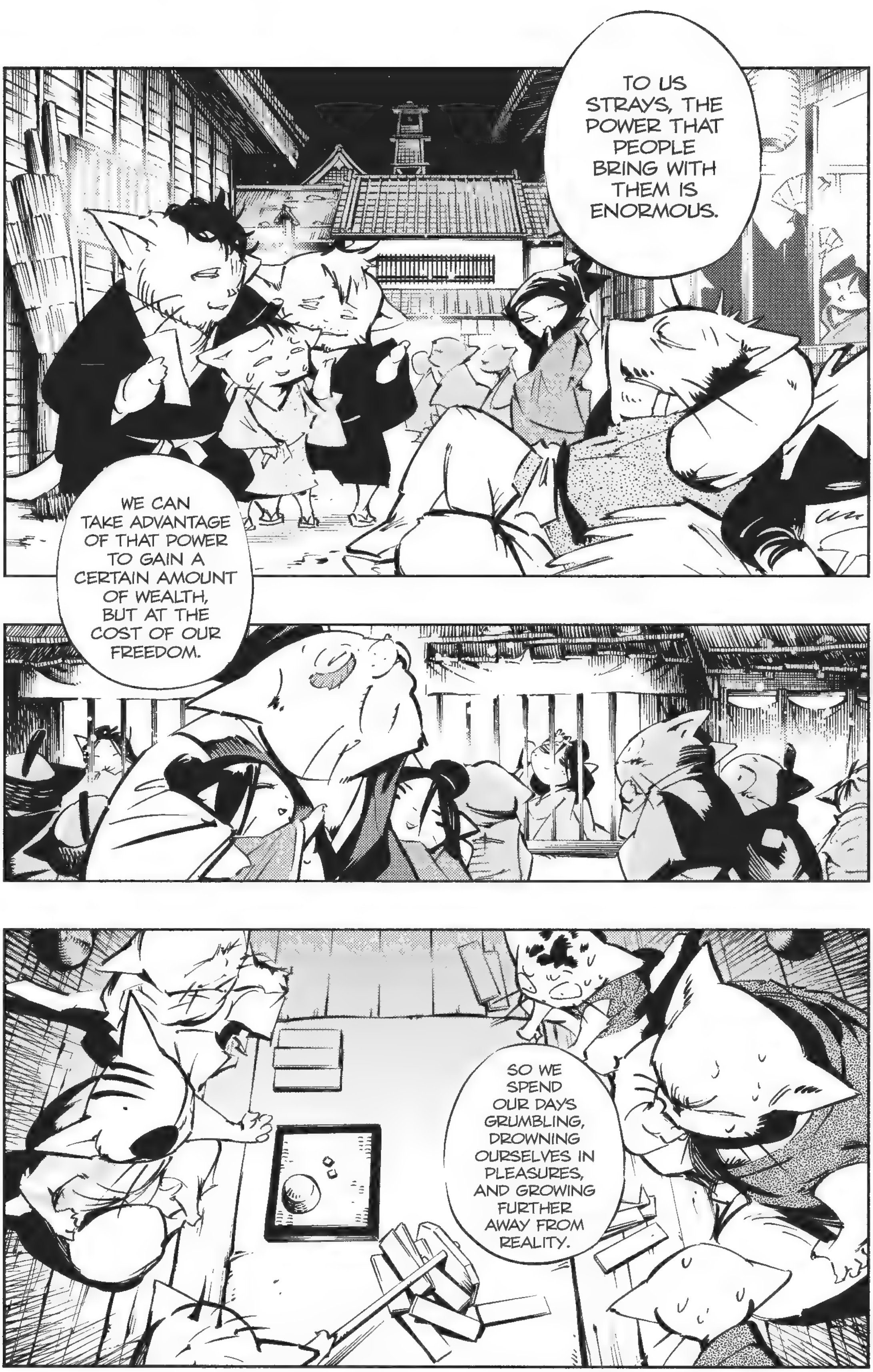

YOU HAVE MY THANKS.
TRULY DELICIOUS TEA.
WHERE WILL YOU BE GOING FROM HERE?
OH, BUT THAT'S NONE OF YOUR CONCERN, IS IT, OSAMURAI-SAN?
...
MROW-RRR?!!
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

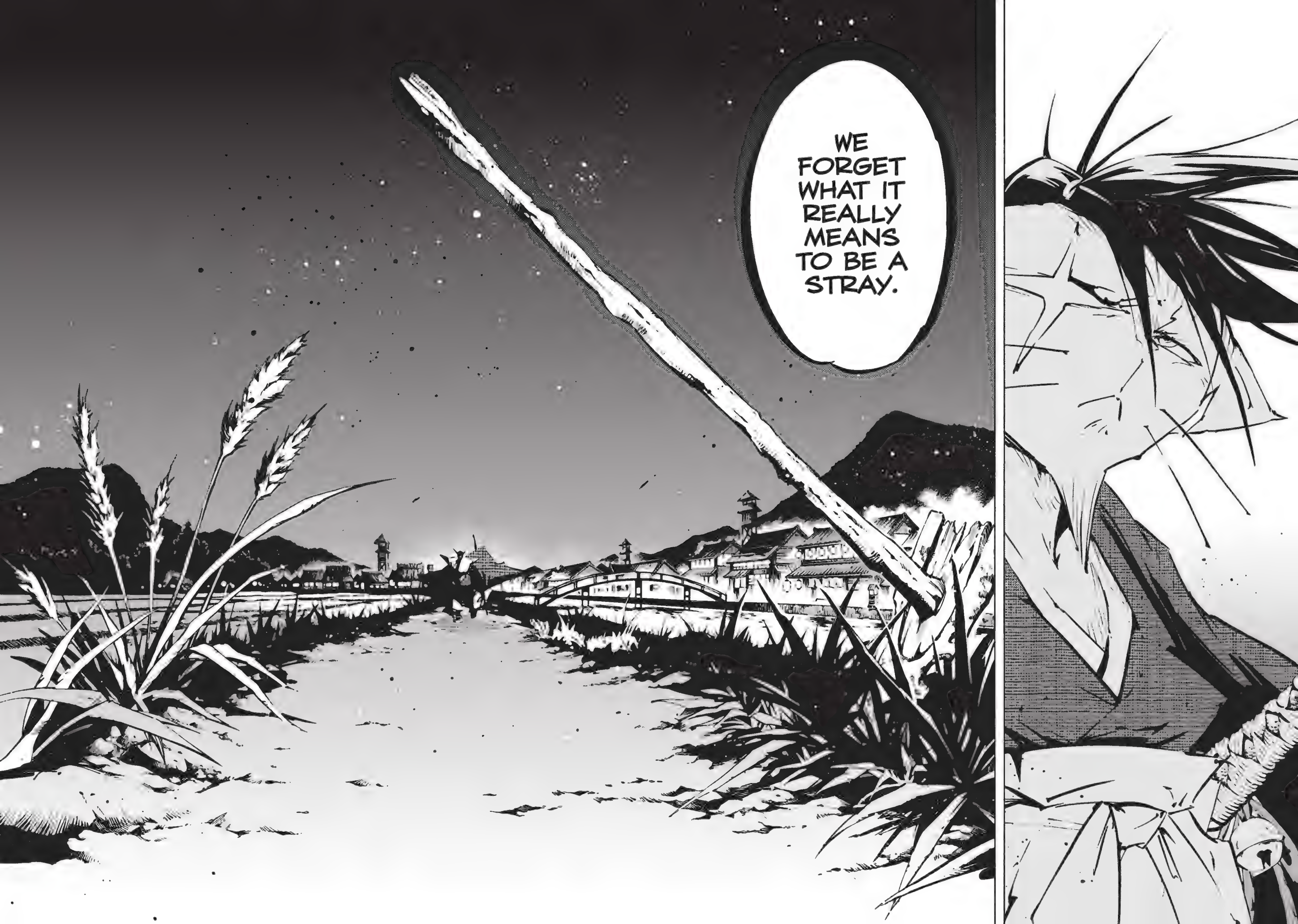

IT'S ONE-EARED KATAHACHI!
BAM
HE'S DEAD! THE LANDLORD'S TAX COLLECTOR!
WHOA, WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING? NO, SERIOUSLY!
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
I HATED HIS GUTS, POOR CAT.
BUT THIS IS BAD NEWS...
WHEN THE LANDLORD GETS WIND OF THIS...
URP!
WHEN I GET WIND OF IT... THEN WHAT?
!
WE'LL USE HIS BONES FOR MEDICINE.
HIS FUR FOR A WRITING BRUSH.
HIS SKIN FOR A SHAMISEN.

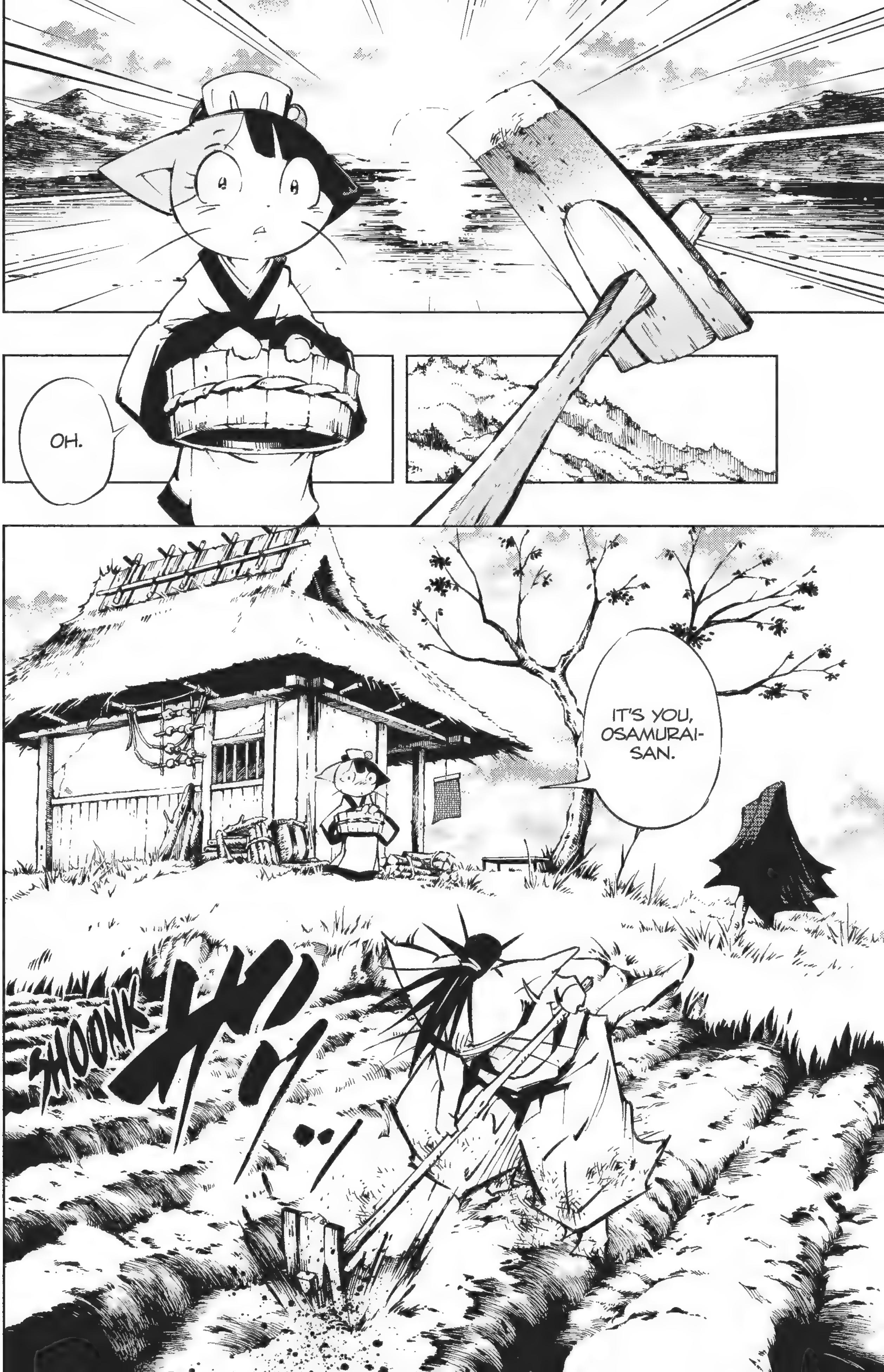

DISSECT HIM BEFORE HE ROTS. I WILL PRESENT HIM TO MY PERSON.
THE ONLY DISPOSABLE PIECE OF A STRAY IS HIS SOUL.

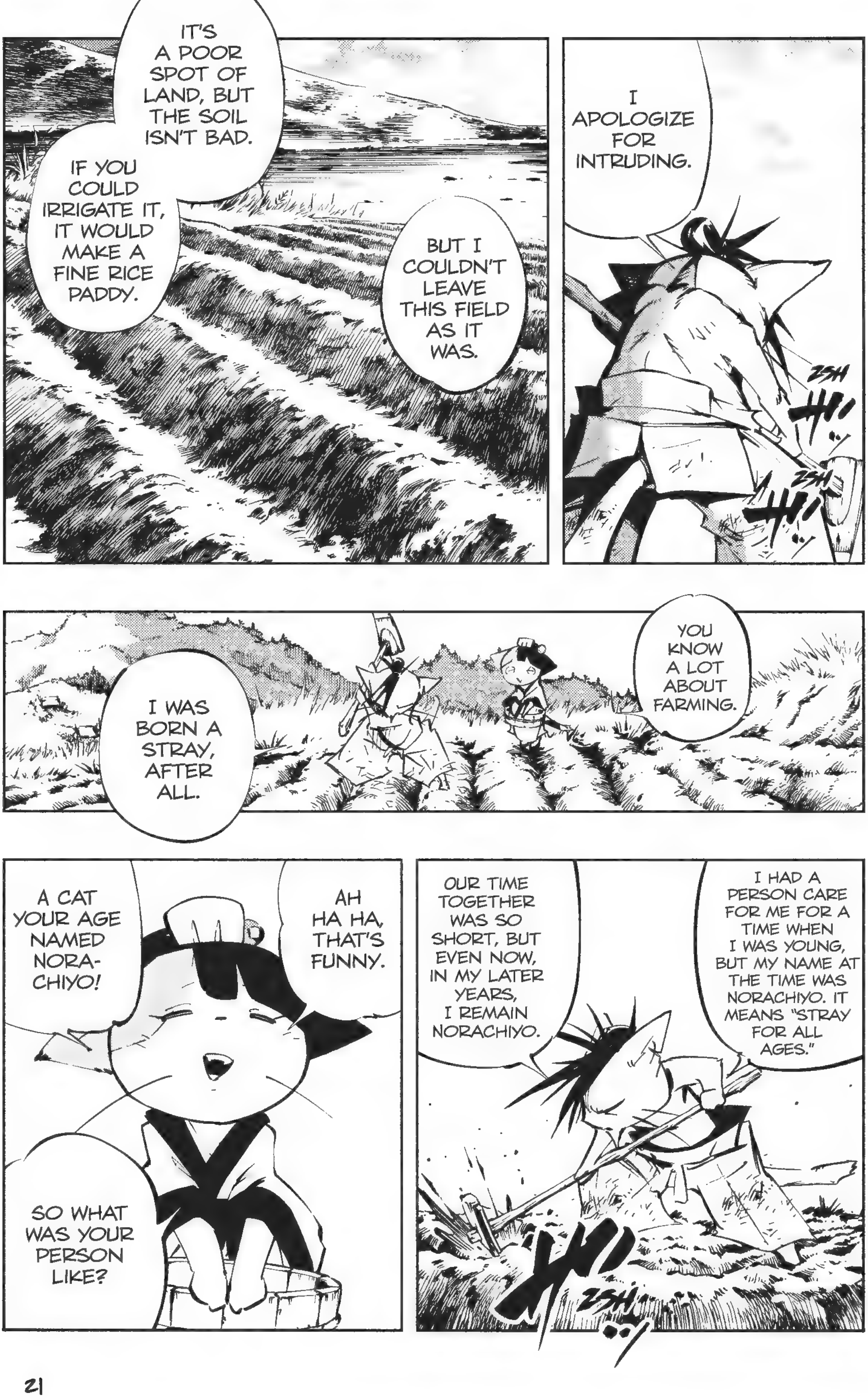

S-S-S-! SIAMECHIKA-SAMA!
MY LORD!
HO, HO, HO! YOU MAY RISE. THE DEATH OF ONE OF HIS ILK IS NO LOSS TO ME.
HO, HO!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I JUST HIRED A SKILLED STRAY.
OH?
WHAT'S THE NEW TOM LIKE?
BUT *SOMEONE* MUST BE MADE AN EXAMPLE OF.
SURELY YOU KNOW THE TEAHOUSE ON THE RIDGE?
CHOP
I UNDERSTAND IT HAS BECOME A HAUNT FOR GRUMBLERS TO VOICE THEIR COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME OF LATE.

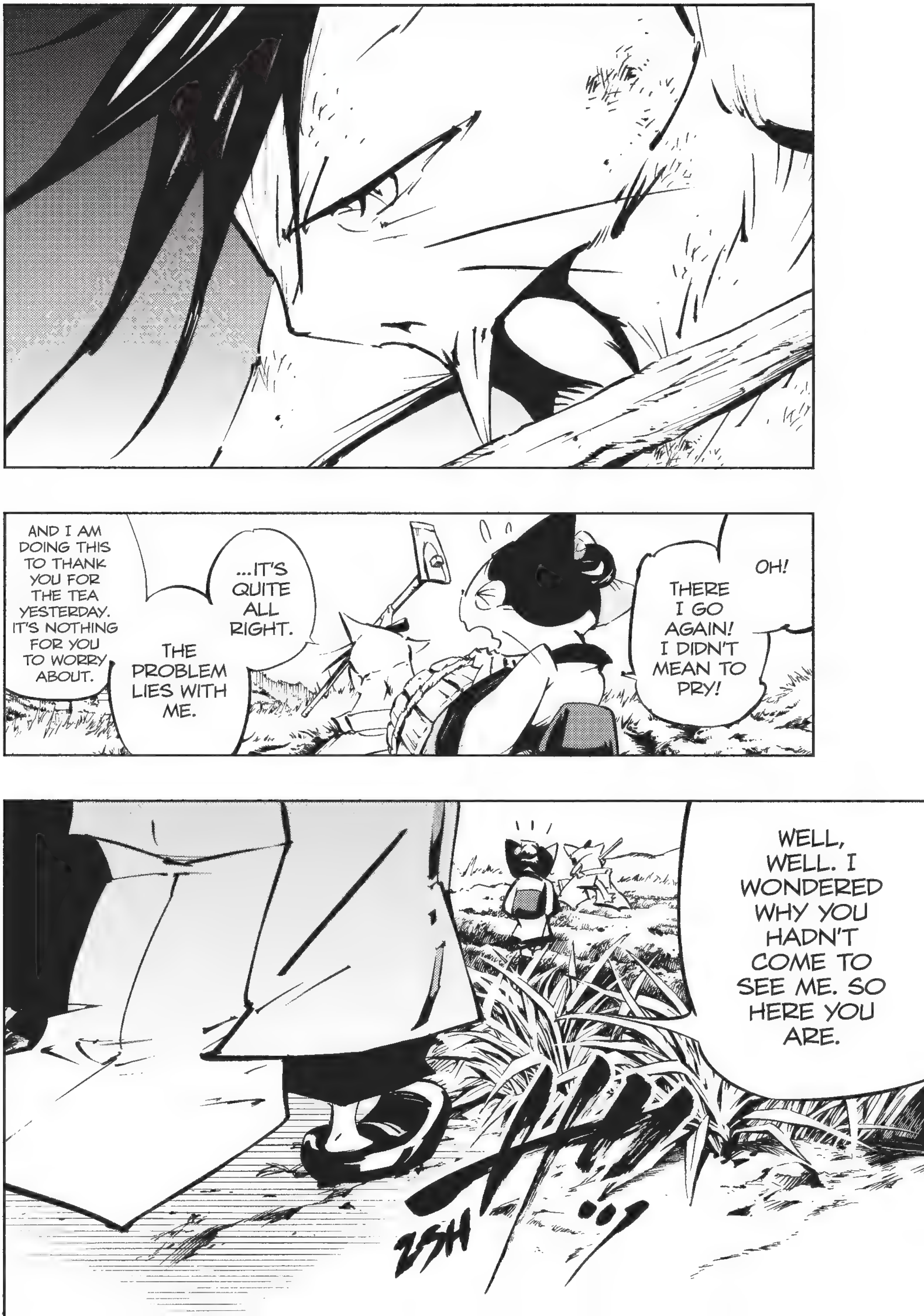

THAT OSAMURAI-SAN HAD SUCH BEAUTIFUL EYES, DON'T YOU AGREE, PAWPA?
PATTER
PATTER
CLUNK
CLUNK
HA HA HA. ARE YOU IN LOVE, OMIKE? WHY DON'T YOU GO WITH HIM?
OH, NO, PAWPA! I'M JUST A KITTEN!
AND SOMEONE HAS TO WORK THE FIELDS. I COULDN'T POSSIBLY LEAVE YOU!
I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU. THE VILLAGE WON'T LAST MUCH LONGER NOW THAT PEOPLE'S HANDS HAVE TOUCHED IT.
WHAT?
LISTEN, OMIKE.
EVERYONE BLAMES THE LANDLORD FOR THEIR TROUBLES, BUT I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY.
IF THEY REALLY HATED THE TAXES, ALL THEY'D HAVE TO DO IS LEAVE HERE AND STAND ON THEIR OWN PAWS.
BUT THEY DON'T, AND FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT IT'S EASIER TO LIVE OFF THE PEOPLE'S SCRAPS.

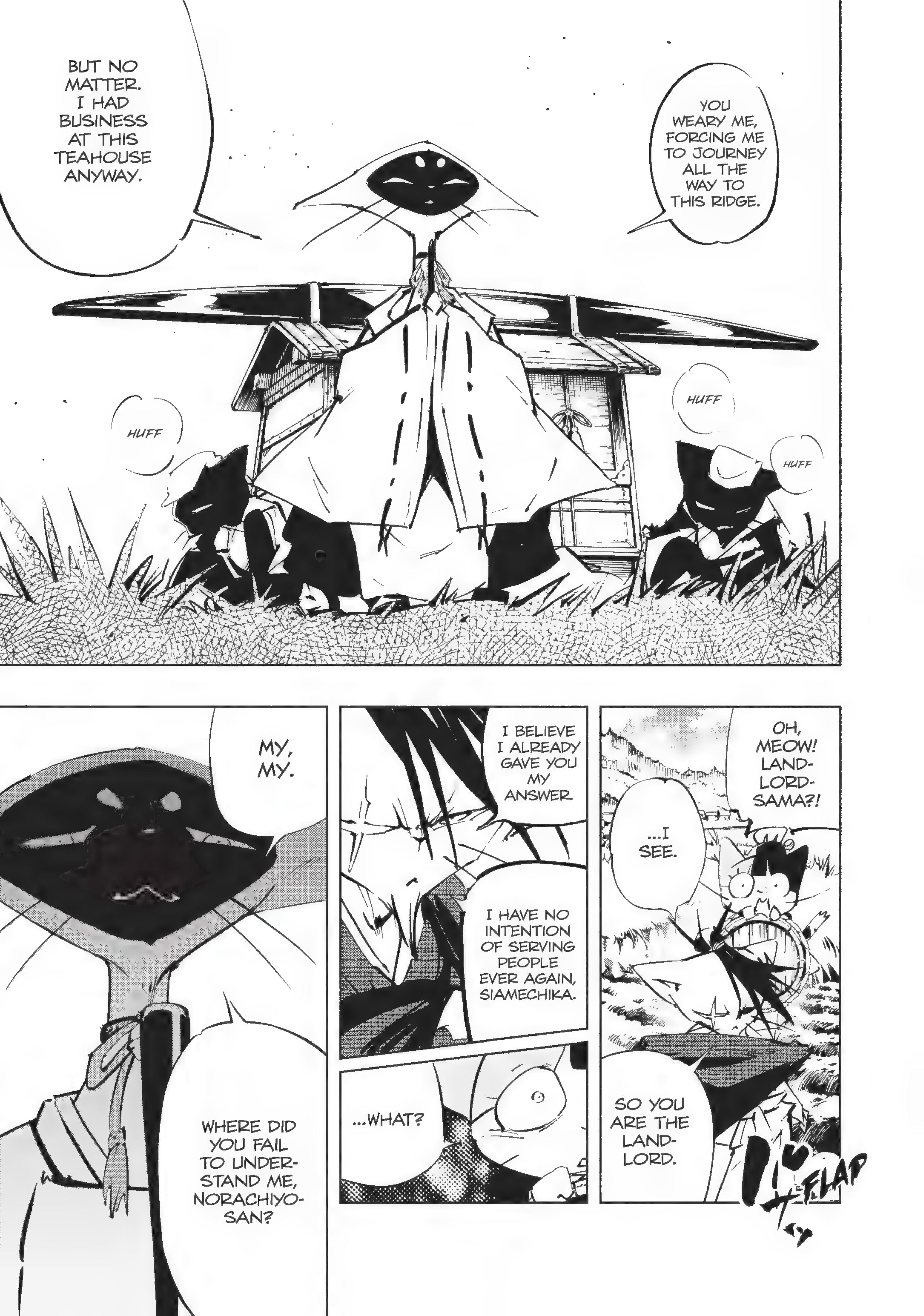

TO US STRAYS, THE POWER THAT PEOPLE BRING WITH THEM IS ENORMOUS.
WE CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT POWER TO GAIN A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF WEALTH, BUT AT THE COST OF OUR FREEDOM.
SO WE SPEND OUR DAYS GRUMBLING, DROWNING OURSELVES IN PLEASURES, AND GROWING FURTHER AWAY FROM REALITY.

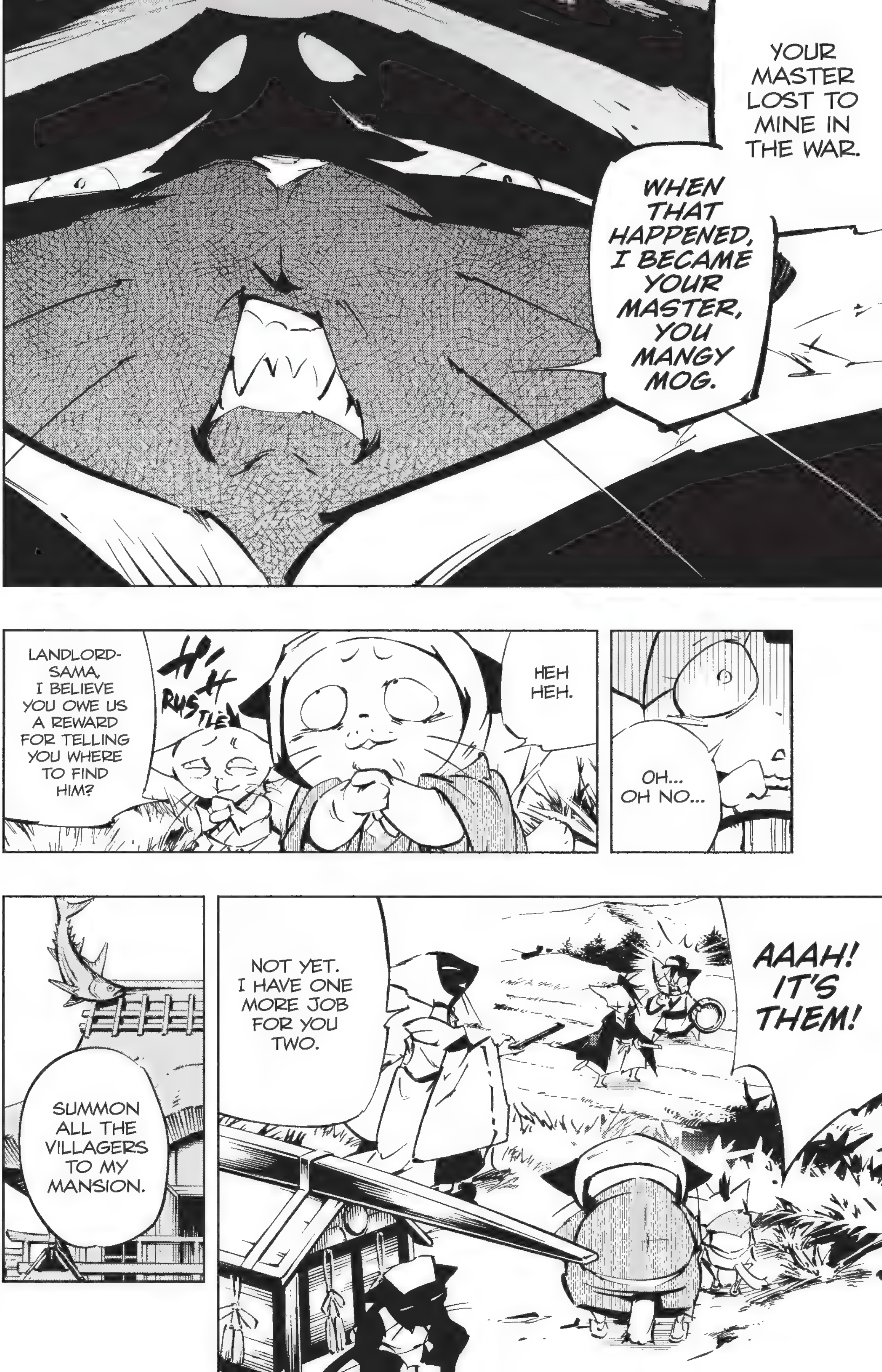

WE FORGET WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE A STRAY.

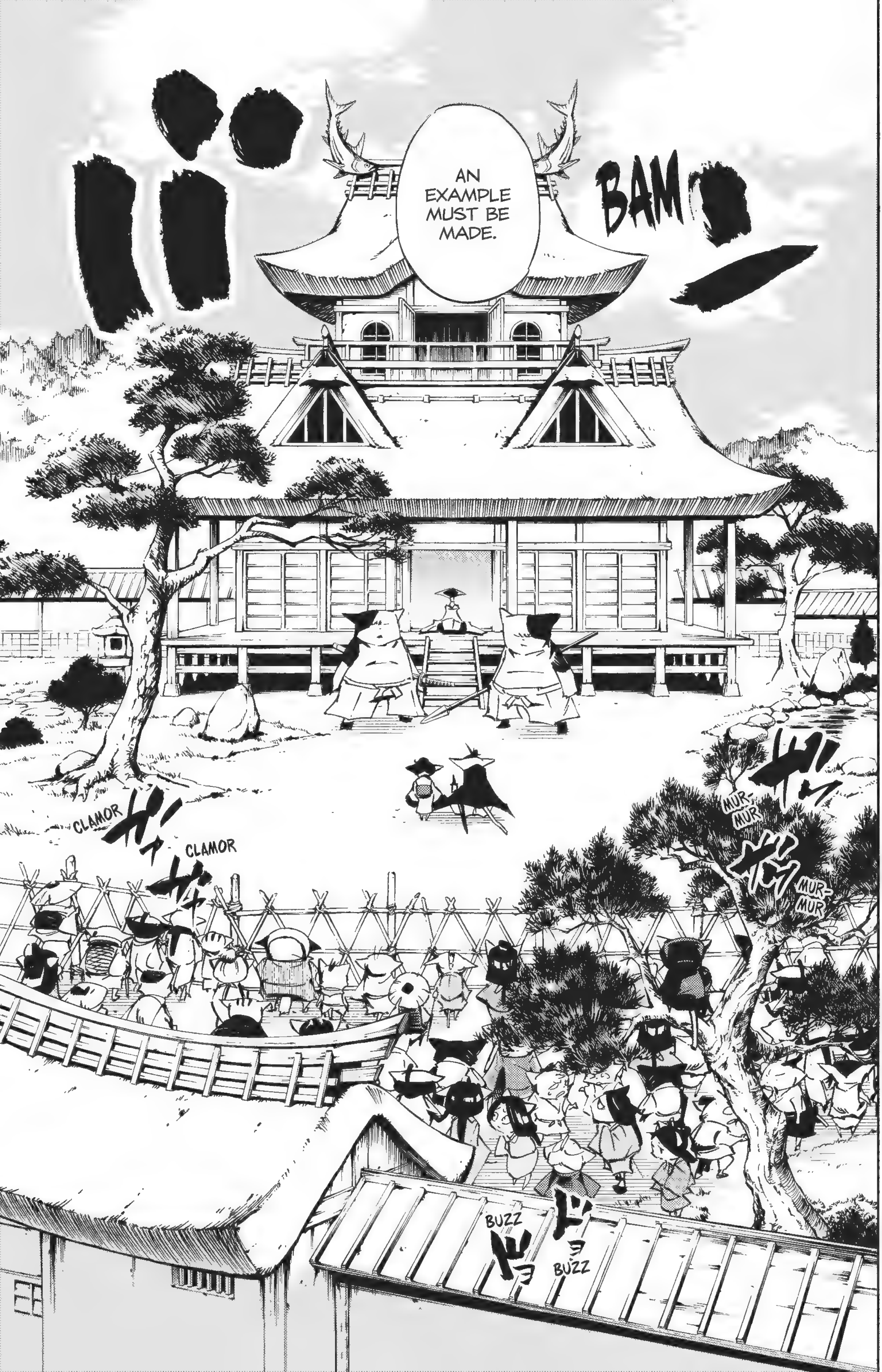

OH.
IT'S YOU, OSAMURAI-SAN.
SHOONK

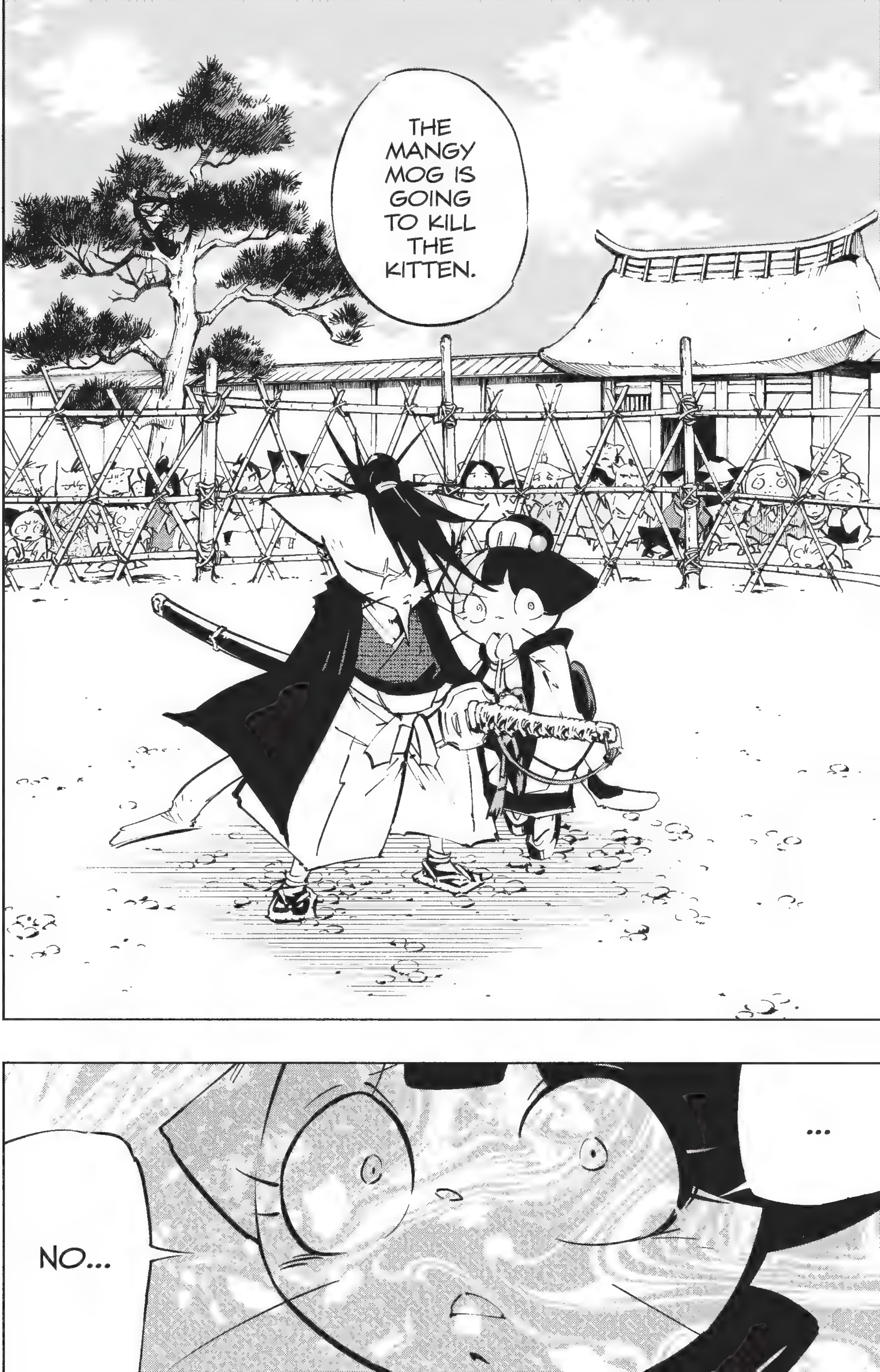

I APOLOGIZE FOR INTRUDING.
IT'S A POOR SPOT OF LAND, BUT THE SOIL ISN'T BAD.
IF YOU COULD IRRIGATE IT, IT WOULD MAKE A FINE RICE PADDY.
BUT I COULDN'T LEAVE THIS FIELD AS IT WAS.
ZSH
ZSH
YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT FARMING.
I WAS BORN A STRAY, AFTER ALL.
I HAD A PERSON CARE FOR ME FOR A TIME WHEN I WAS YOUNG, BUT MY NAME AT THE TIME WAS NORACHIYO. IT MEANS "STRAY FOR ALL AGES."
OUR TIME TOGETHER WAS SO SHORT, BUT EVEN NOW, IN MY LATER YEARS, I REMAIN NORACHIYO.
ZSH
AH HA HA, THAT'S FUNNY.
A CAT YOUR AGE NAMED NORA-CHIYO!
SO WHAT WAS YOUR PERSON LIKE?

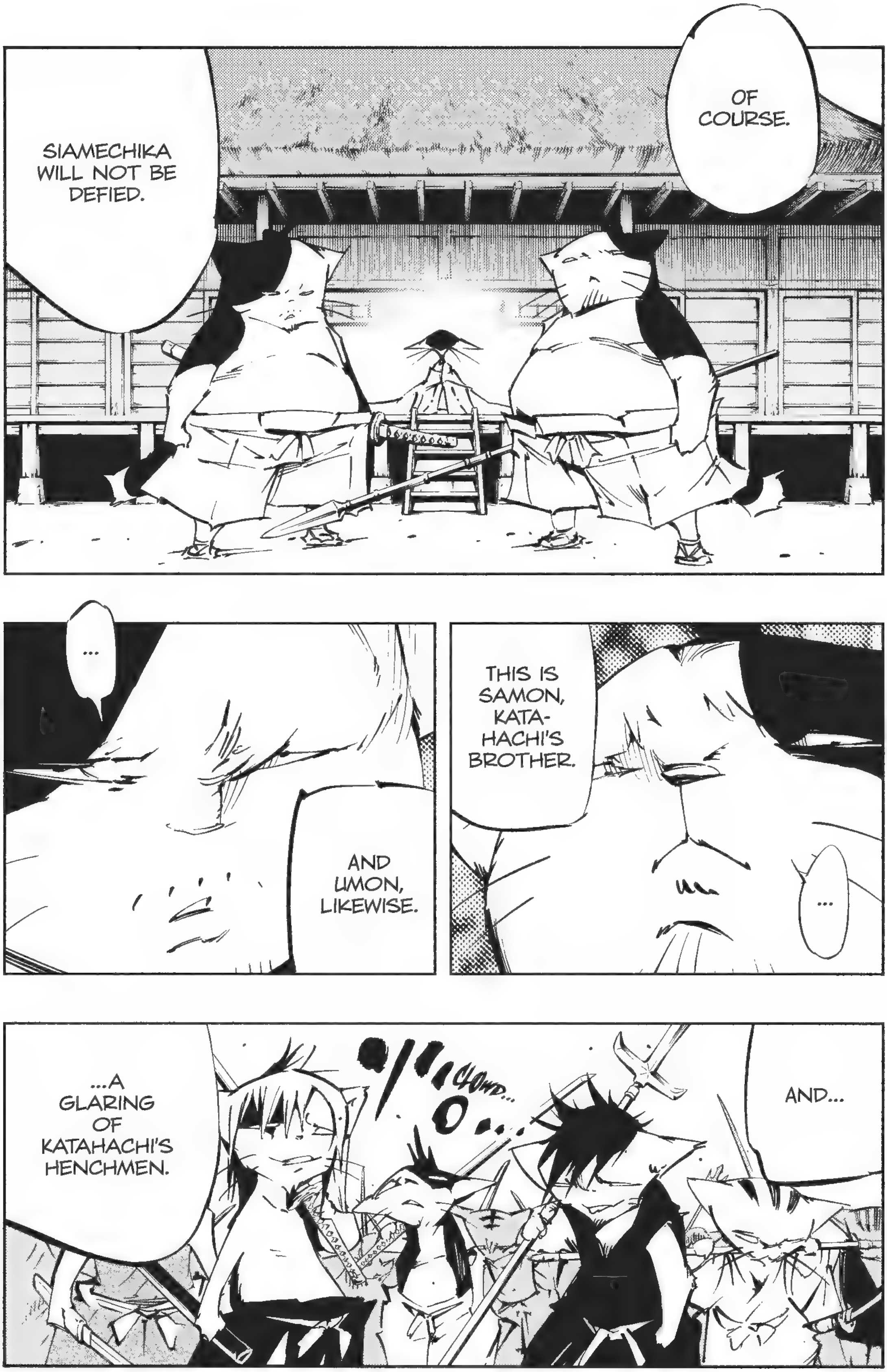

OH!
THERE I GO AGAIN! I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRY!
...IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT.
THE PROBLEM LIES WITH ME.
AND I AM DOING THIS TO THANK YOU FOR THE TEA YESTERDAY. IT'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO WORRY ABOUT.
WELL, WELL. I WONDERED WHY YOU HADN'T COME TO SEE ME. SO HERE YOU ARE.
ZSH

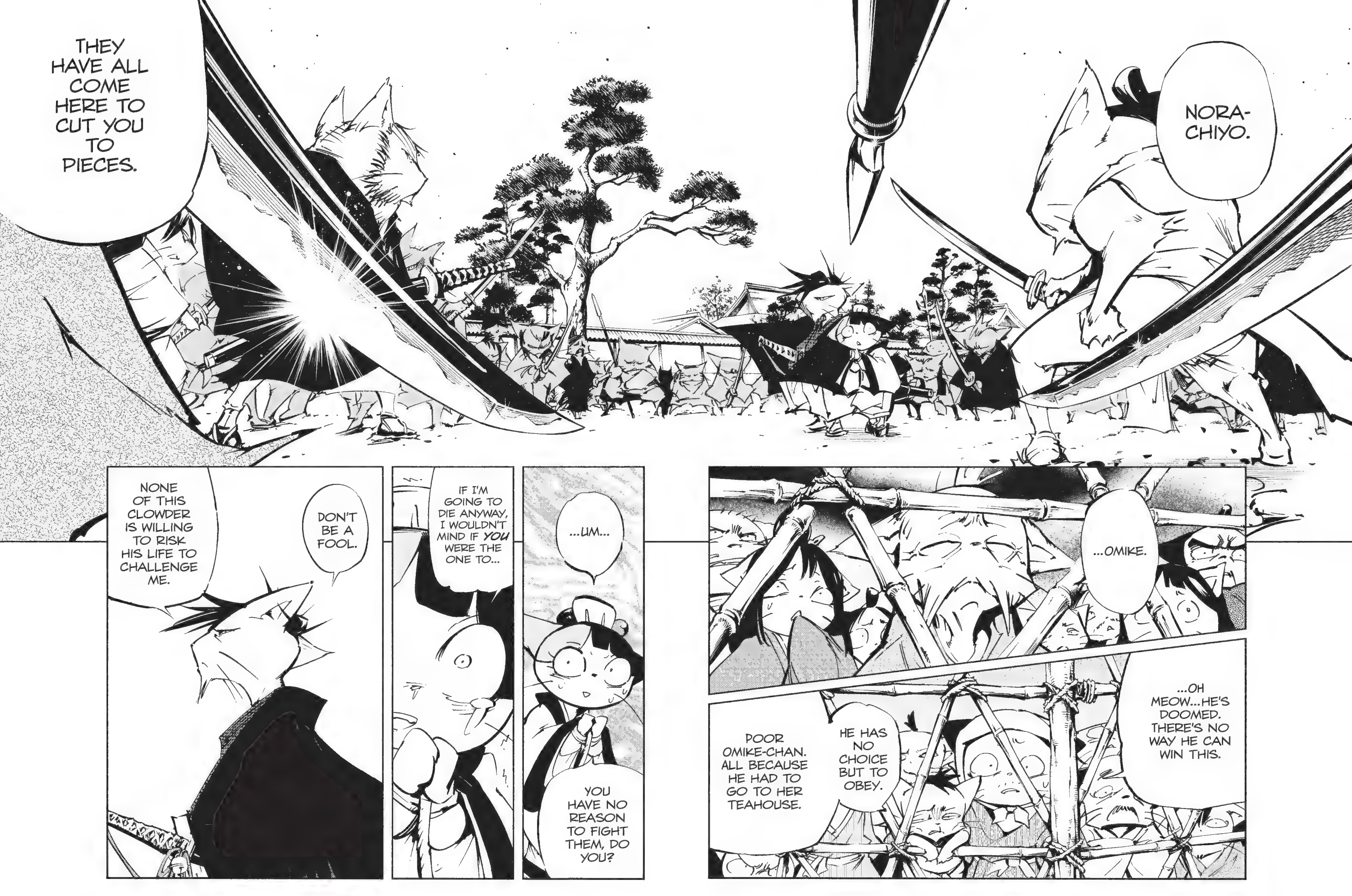

YOU WEARY ME, FORCING ME TO JOURNEY ALL THE WAY TO THIS RIDGE.
BUT NO MATTER. I HAD BUSINESS AT THIS TEAHOUSE ANYWAY.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
OH, MEOW! LANDLORD-SAMA?!
...I SEE.
I BELIEVE I ALREADY GAVE YOU MY ANSWER.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SERVING PEOPLE EVER AGAIN, SIAMECHIKA.
SO YOU ARE THE LANDLORD.
FLAP
...WHAT?
MY, MY.
WHERE DID YOU FAIL TO UNDERSTAND ME, NORACHIYO-SAN?

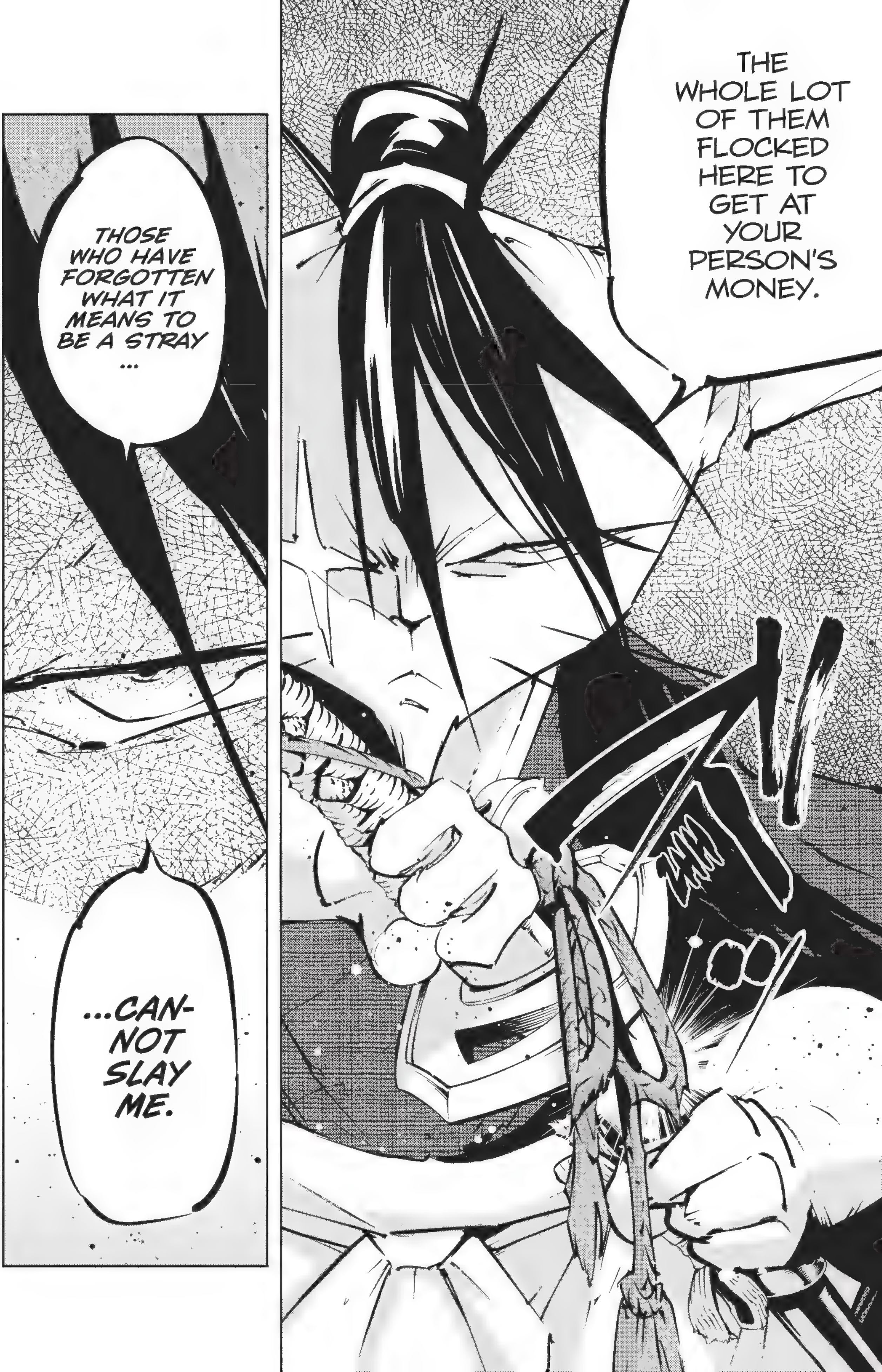

YOUR MASTER LOST TO MINE IN THE WAR.
WHEN THAT HAPPENED, I BECAME YOUR MASTER, YOU MANGY MOG.
OH... OH NO...
HEH HEH.
RUSTLE
LANDLORD-SAMA, I BELIEVE YOU OWE US A REWARD FOR TELLING YOU WHERE TO FIND HIM?
AAAH! IT'S THEM!
NOT YET. I HAVE ONE MORE JOB FOR YOU TWO.
SUMMON ALL THE VILLAGERS TO MY MANSION.

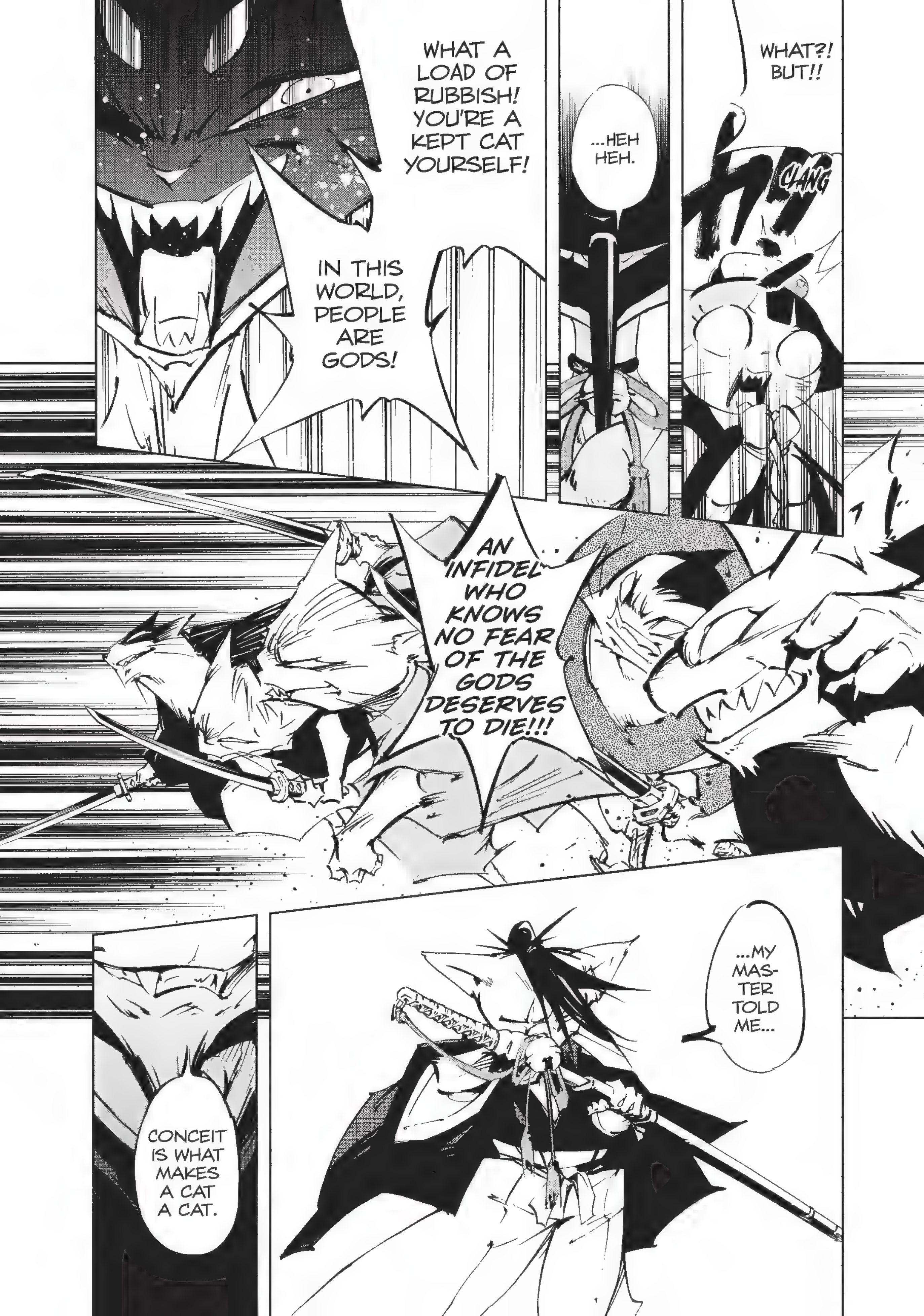

AN EXAMPLE MUST BE MADE.
BAM
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
CLAMOR
CLAMOR
BUZZ
BUZZ

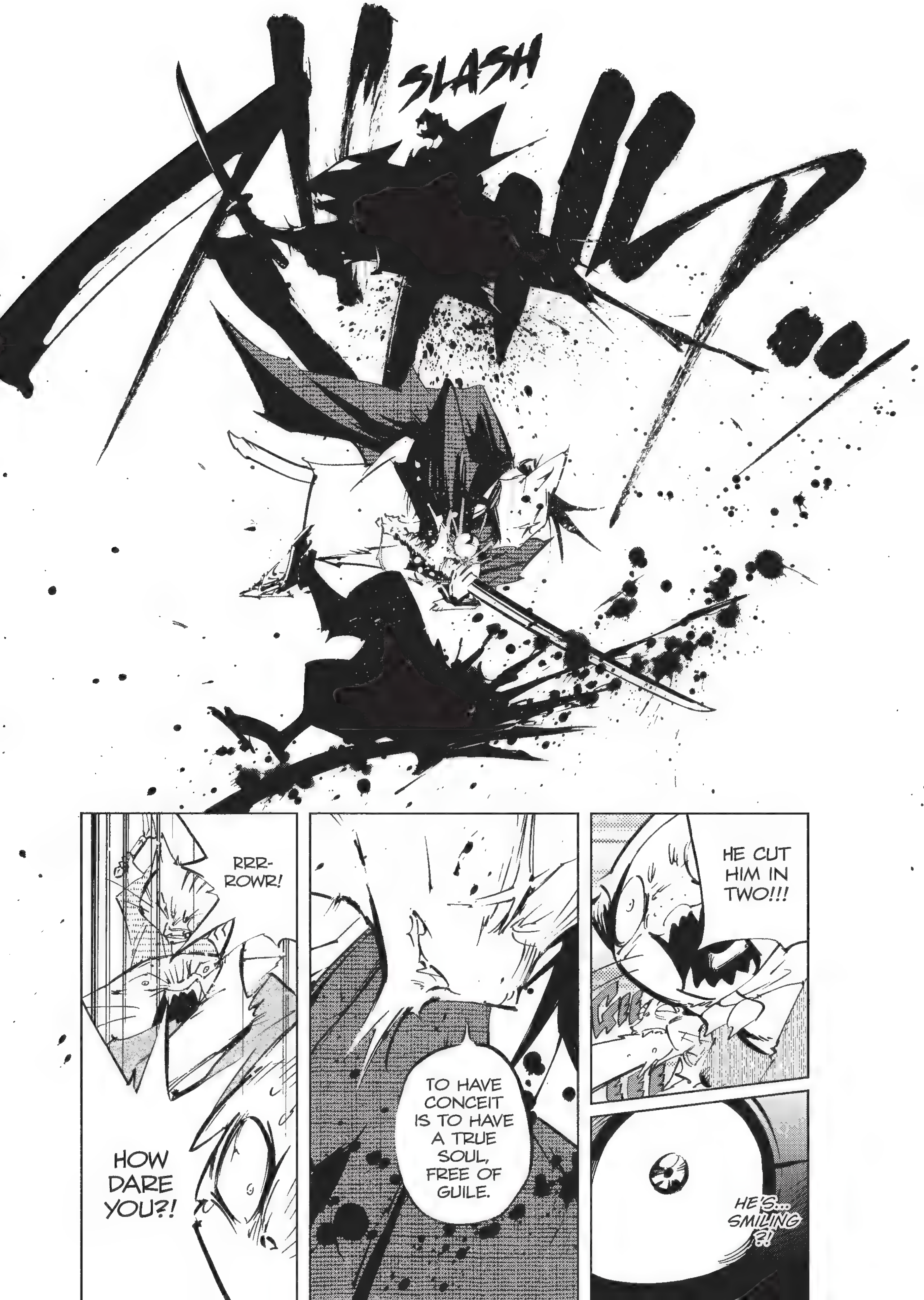

THE MANGY MOG IS GOING TO KILL THE KITTEN.
...
NO...

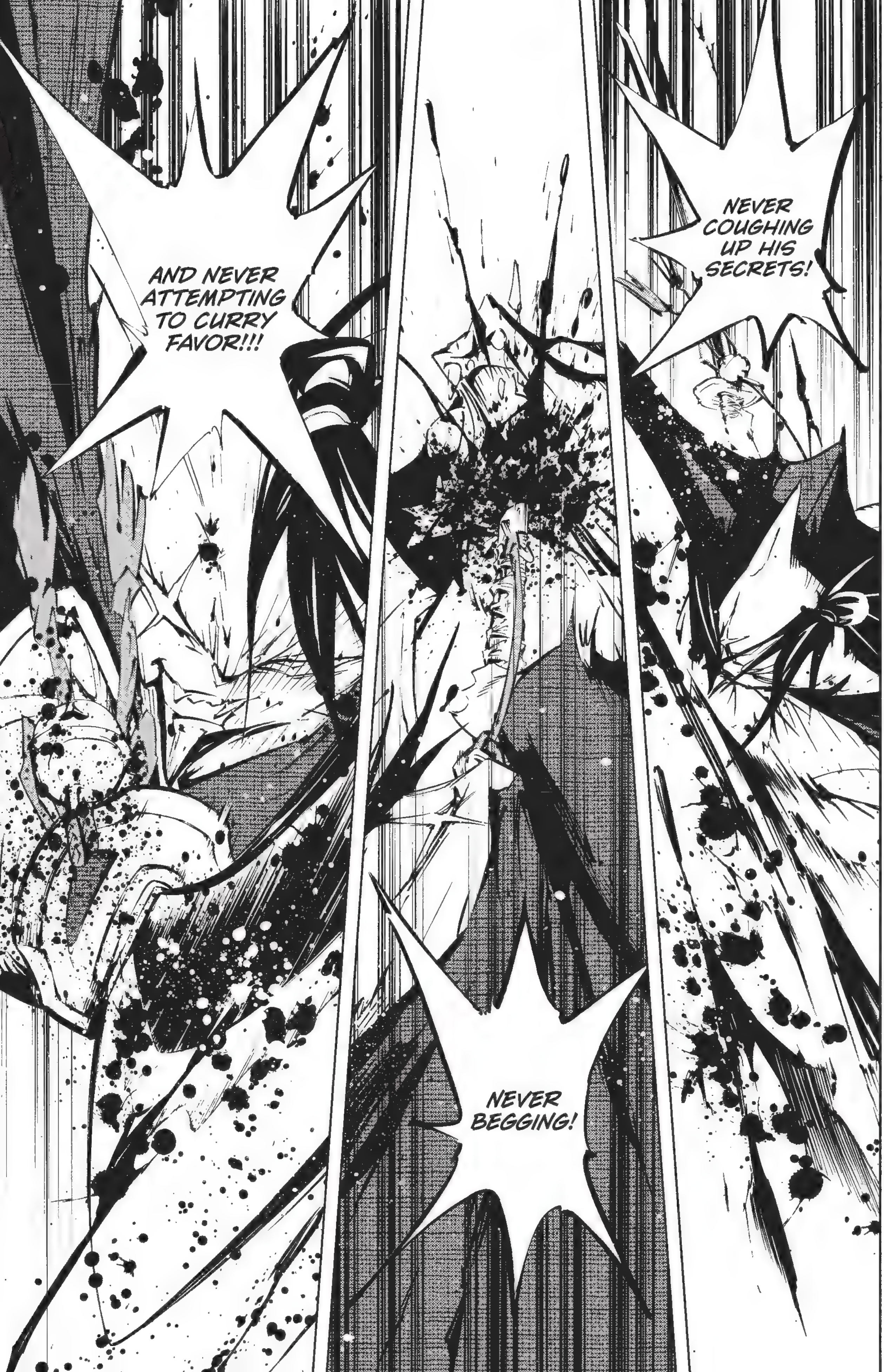

OF COURSE.
SIAMECHIKA WILL NOT BE DEFIED.
THIS IS SAMON, KATAHACHI'S BROTHER.
...
...
AND UMON, LIKEWISE.
AND...
CLOMP...
...A GLARING OF KATAHACHI'S HENCHMEN.

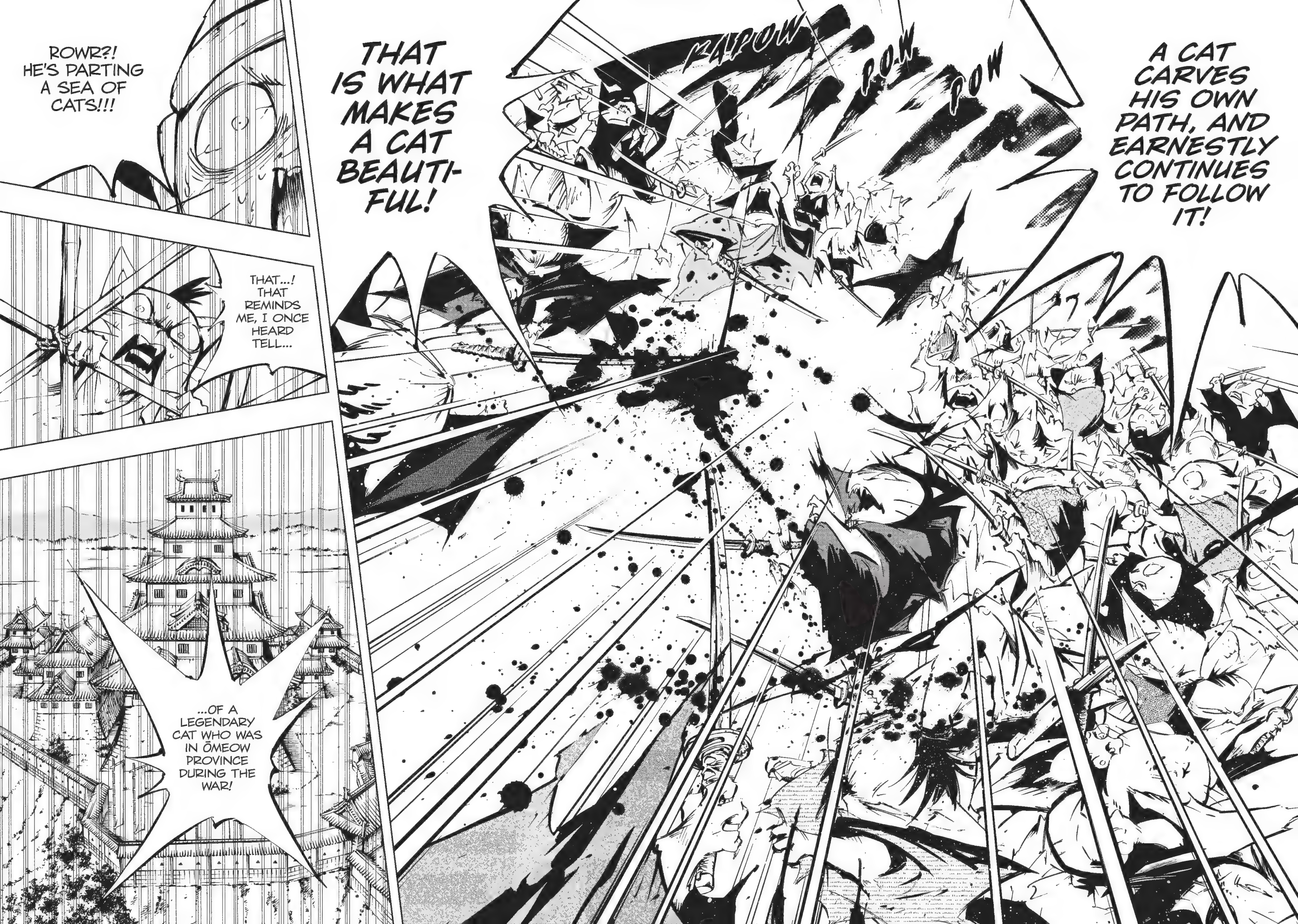

NORA-CHIYO.
THEY HAVE ALL COME HERE TO CUT YOU TO PIECES.
...OMIKE.
...OH MEOW...HE'S DOOMED. THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN WIN THIS.
HE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY.
POOR OMIKE-CHAN. ALL BECAUSE HE HAD TO GO TO HER TEAHOUSE.
...UM...
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO FIGHT THEM, DO YOU?
IF I'M GOING TO DIE ANYWAY, I WOULDN'T MIND IF *YOU* WERE THE ONE TO...
DON'T BE A FOOL.
NONE OF THIS CLOWDER IS WILLING TO RISK HIS LIFE TO CHALLENGE ME.

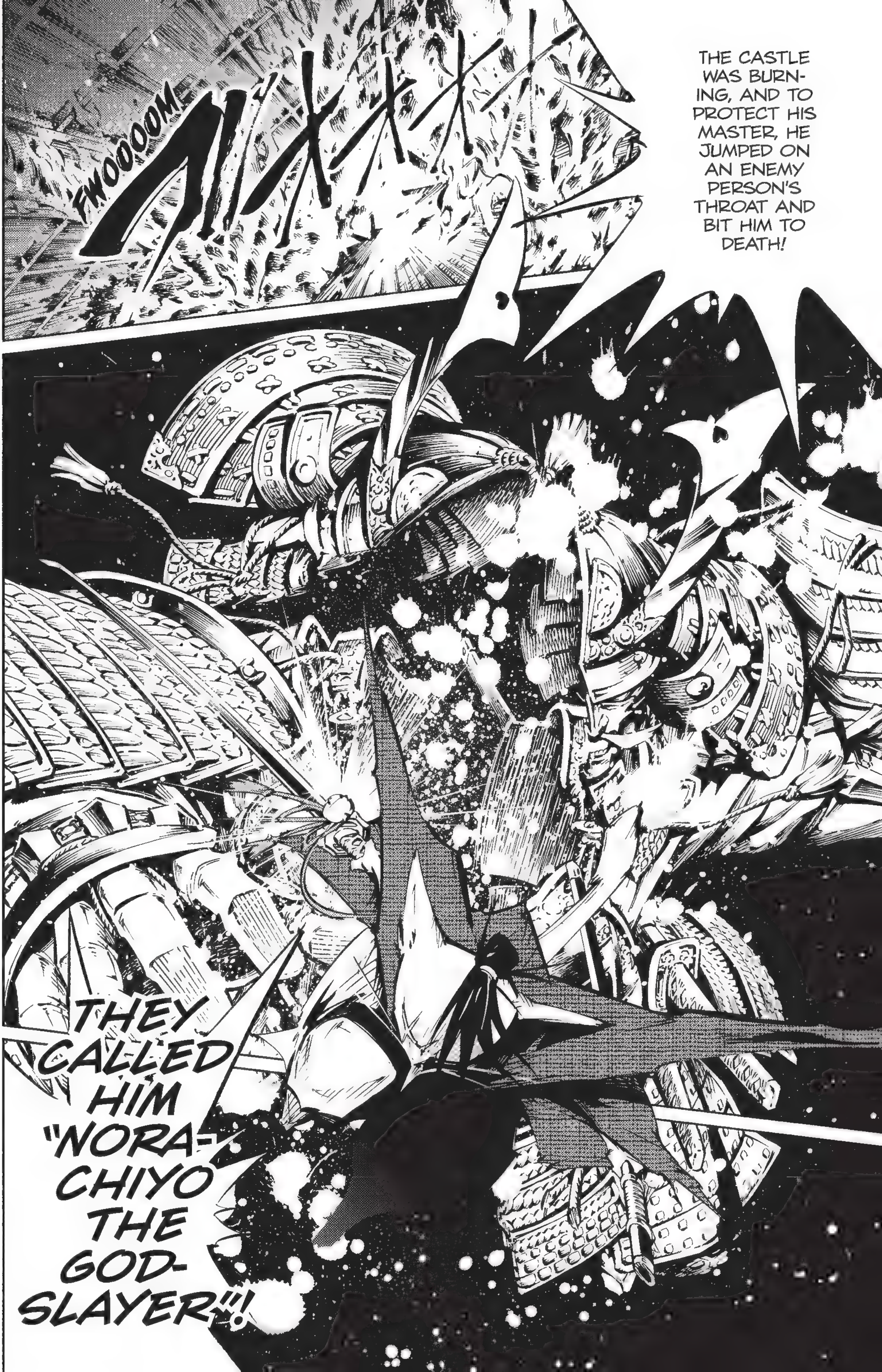

THE WHOLE LOT OF THEM FLOCKED HERE TO GET AT YOUR PERSON'S MONEY.
THOSE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A STRAY ...
...CAN-NOT SLAY ME.

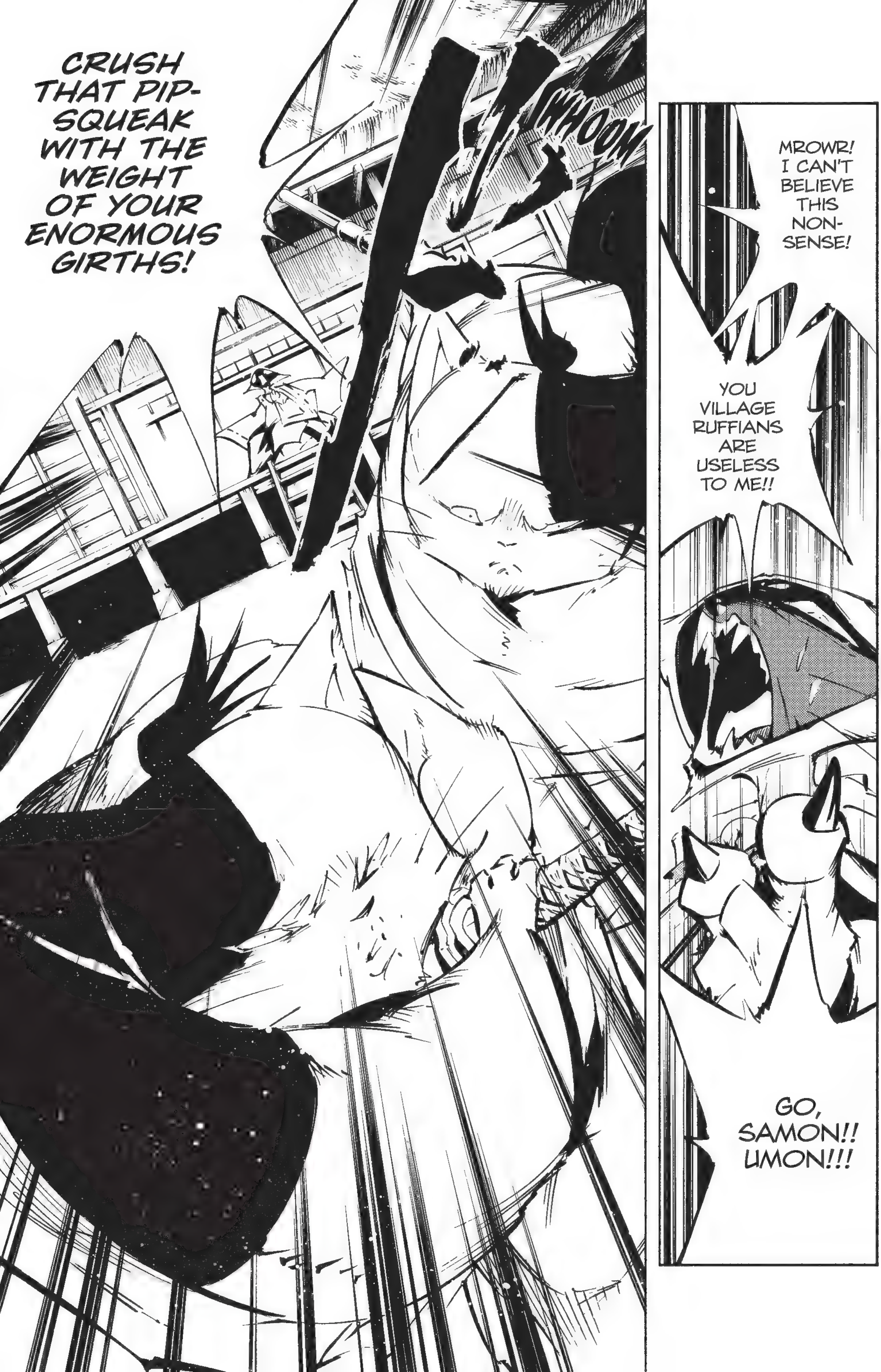

WHAT?! BUT!!
CLANG
...HEH HEH.
WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH! YOU'RE A KEPT CAT YOURSELF!
IN THIS WORLD, PEOPLE ARE GODS!
AN INFIDEL WHO KNOWS NO FEAR OF THE GODS DESERVES TO DIE!!!
...MY MASTER TOLD ME...
CONCEIT IS WHAT MAKES A CAT A CAT.

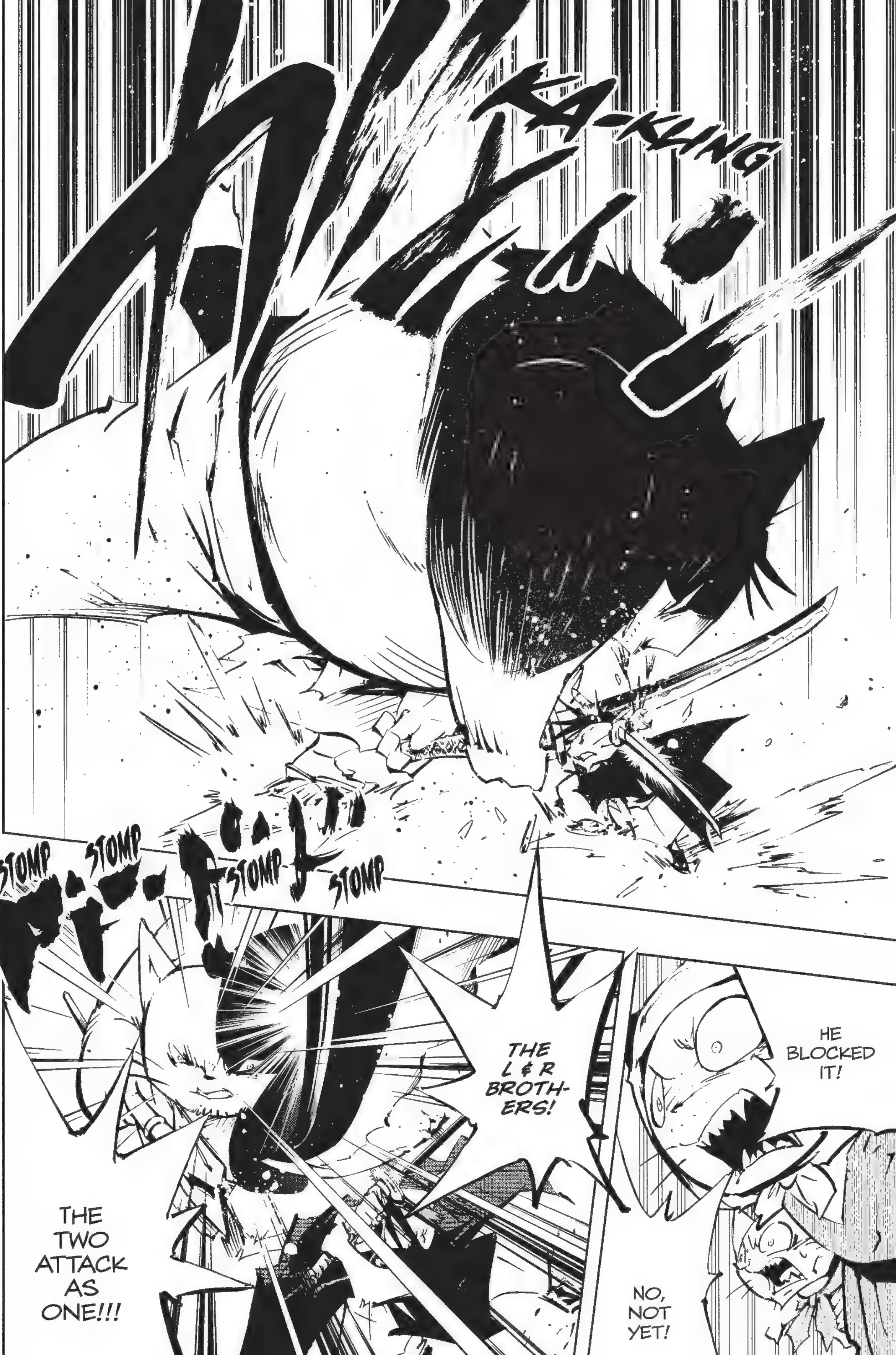

SLASH
HE CUT HIM IN TWO!!!
HE'S... SMILING?!
TO HAVE CONCEIT IS TO HAVE A TRUE SOUL, FREE OF GUILE.
RRR-ROWR!
HOW DARE YOU?!

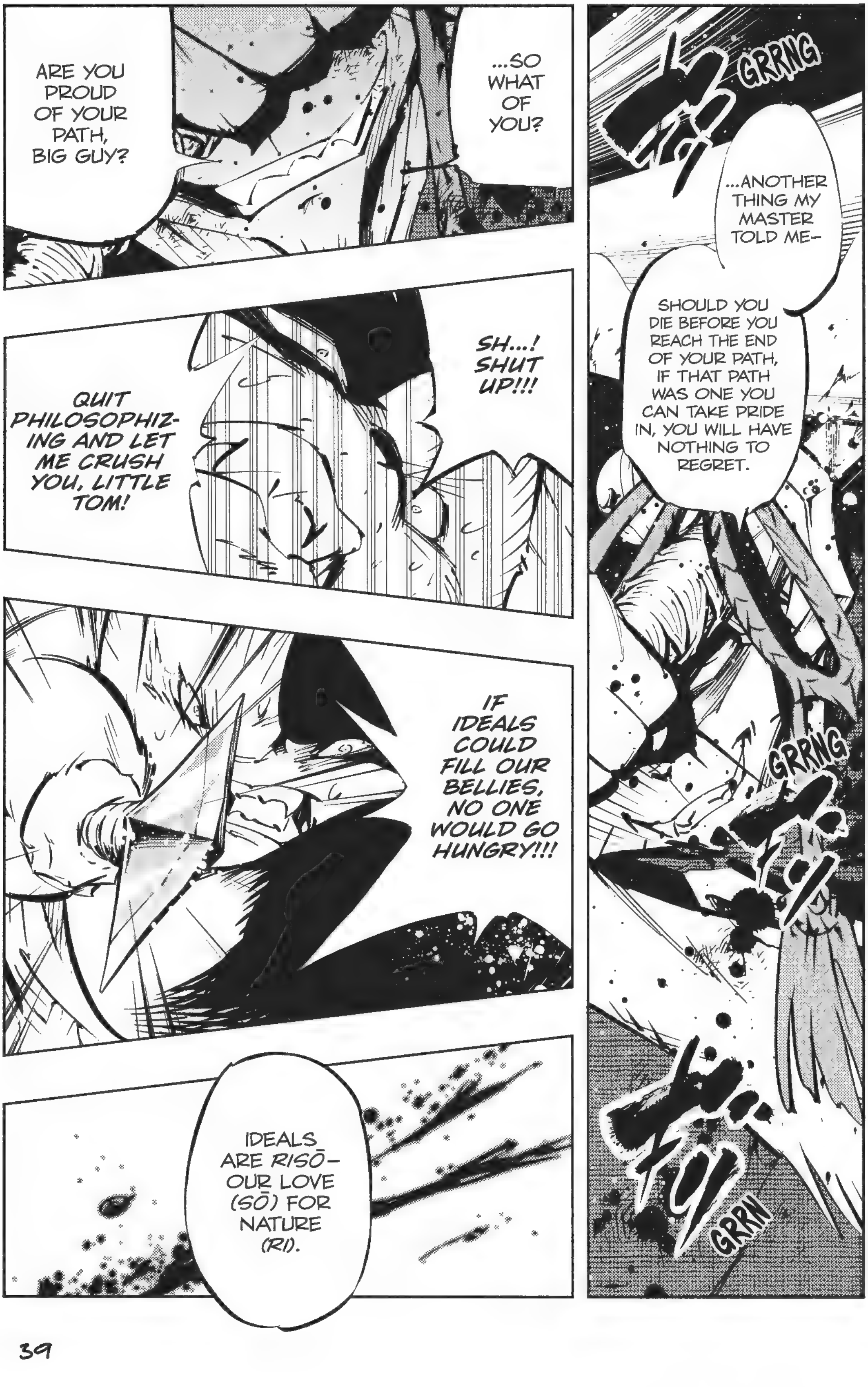

NEVER COUGHING UP HIS SECRETS!
AND NEVER ATTEMPTING TO CURRY FAVOR!!!
NEVER BEGGING!

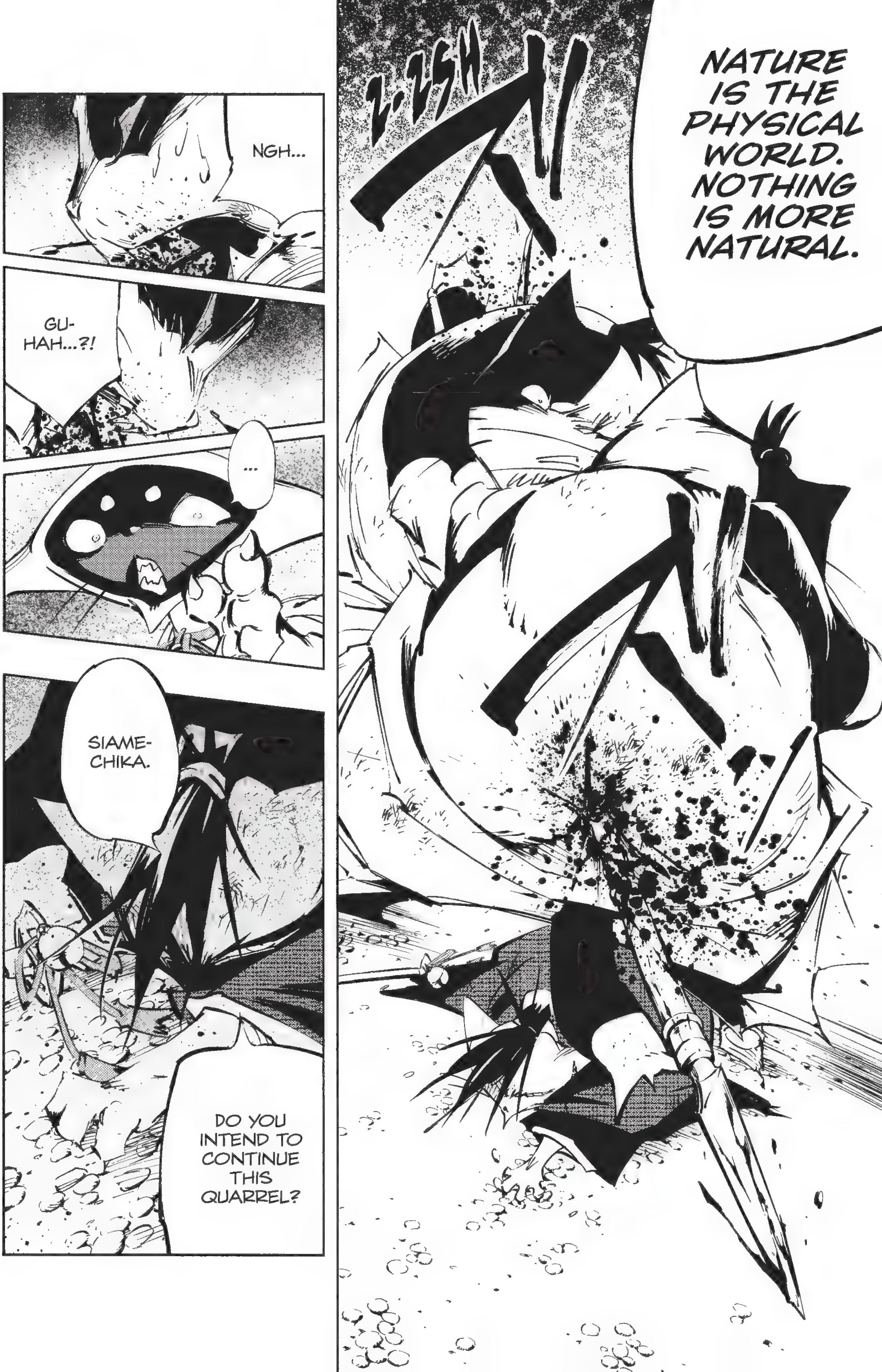

A CAT CARVES HIS OWN PATH, AND EARNESTLY CONTINUES TO FOLLOW IT!
KAPOW
POW
POW
THAT IS WHAT MAKES A CAT BEAUTIFUL!
ROWR?! HE'S PARTING A SEA OF CATS!!!
THAT...! THAT REMINDS ME, I ONCE HEARD TELL...
...OF A LEGENDARY CAT WHO WAS IN ŌMEOW PROVINCE DURING THE WAR!

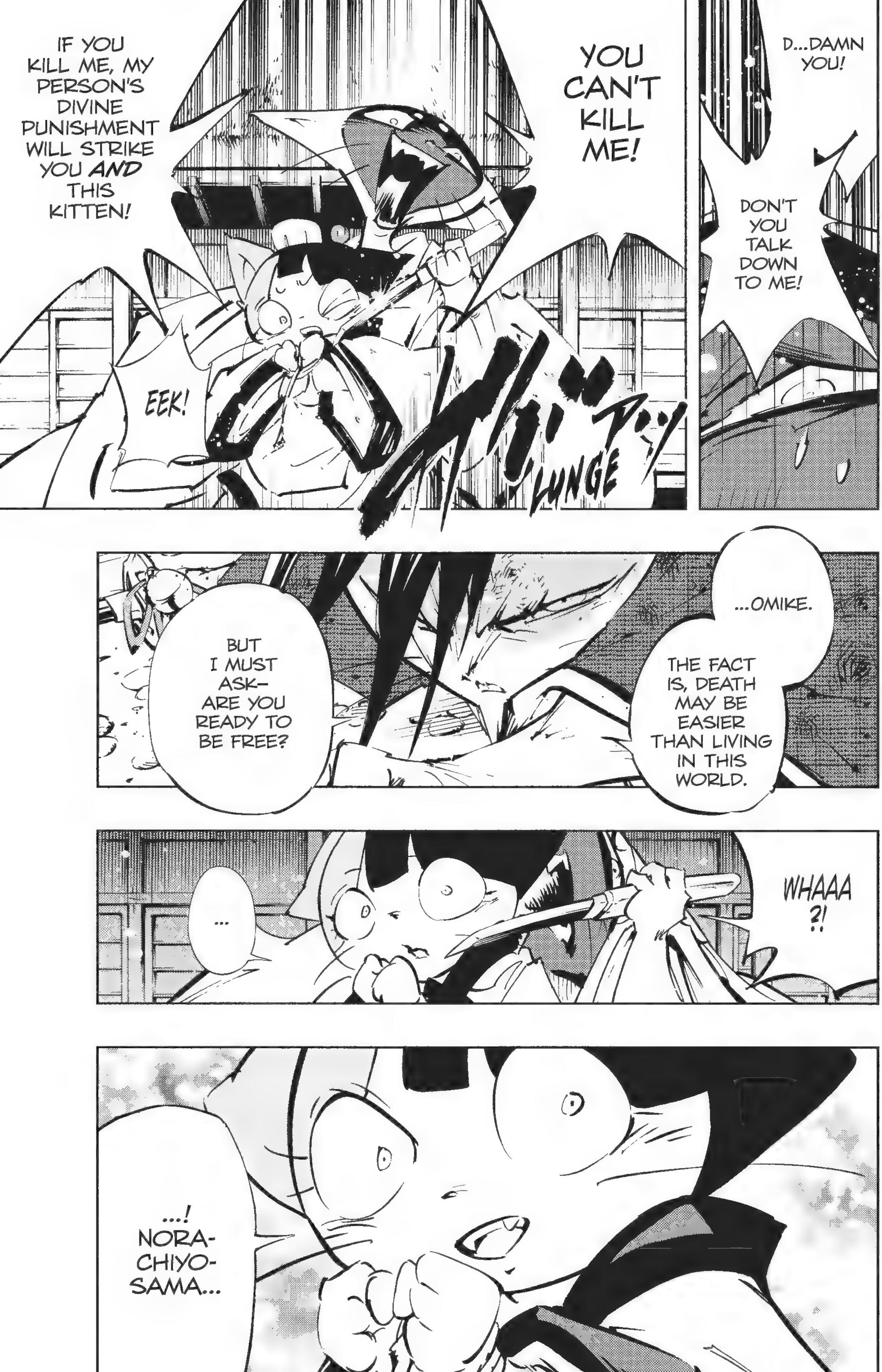

THE CASTLE WAS BURNING, AND TO PROTECT HIS MASTER, HE JUMPED ON AN ENEMY PERSON'S THROAT AND BIT HIM TO DEATH!
FWOOOOM
THEY CALLED HIM "NORA-CHIYO THE GOD-SLAYER"!

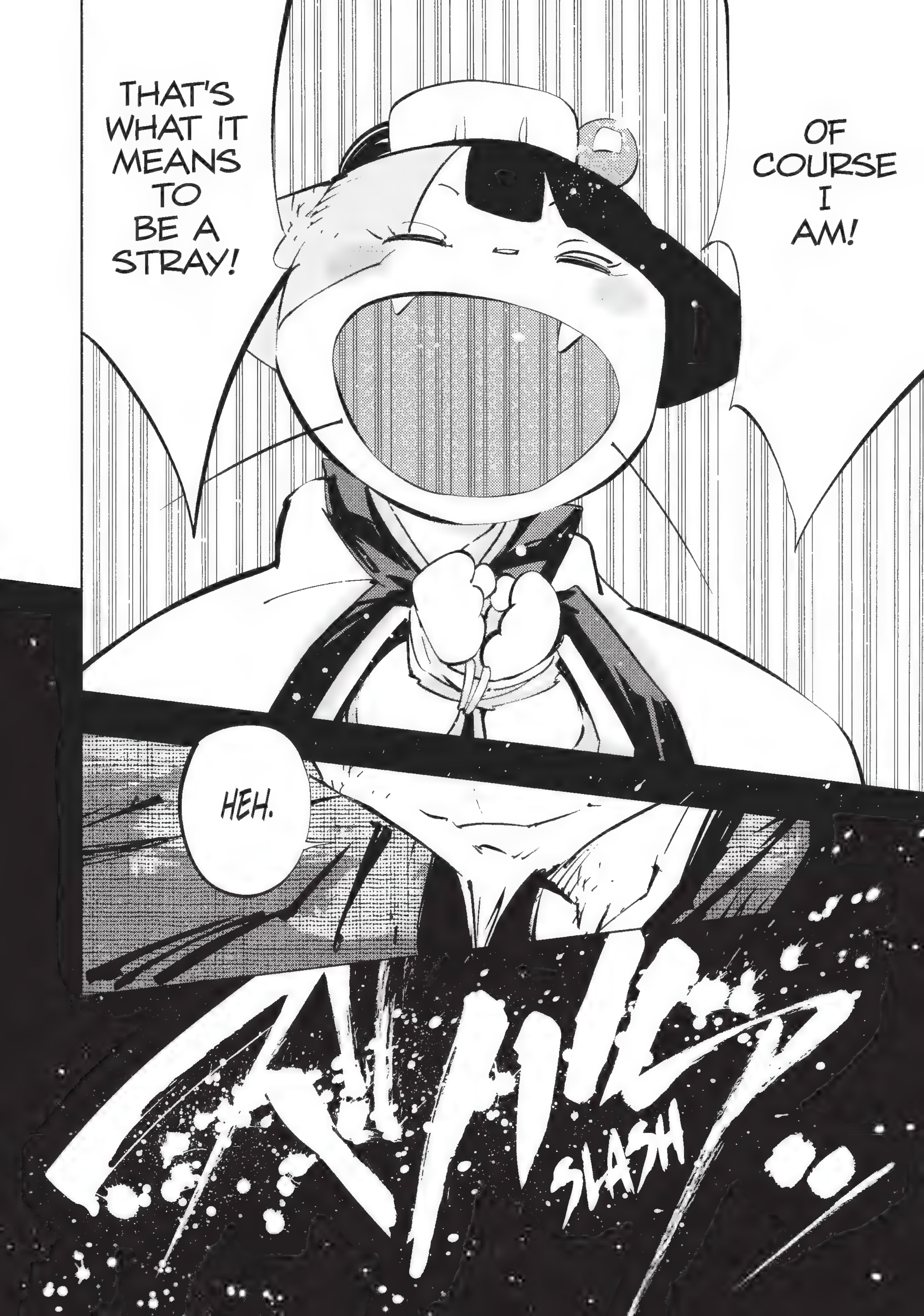

MROWR! I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS NONSENSE!
YOU VILLAGE RUFFIANS ARE USELESS TO ME!!
GO, SAMON!! UMON!!!
CRUSH THAT PIPSQUEAK WITH THE WEIGHT OF YOUR ENORMOUS GIRTHS!
WHOOM

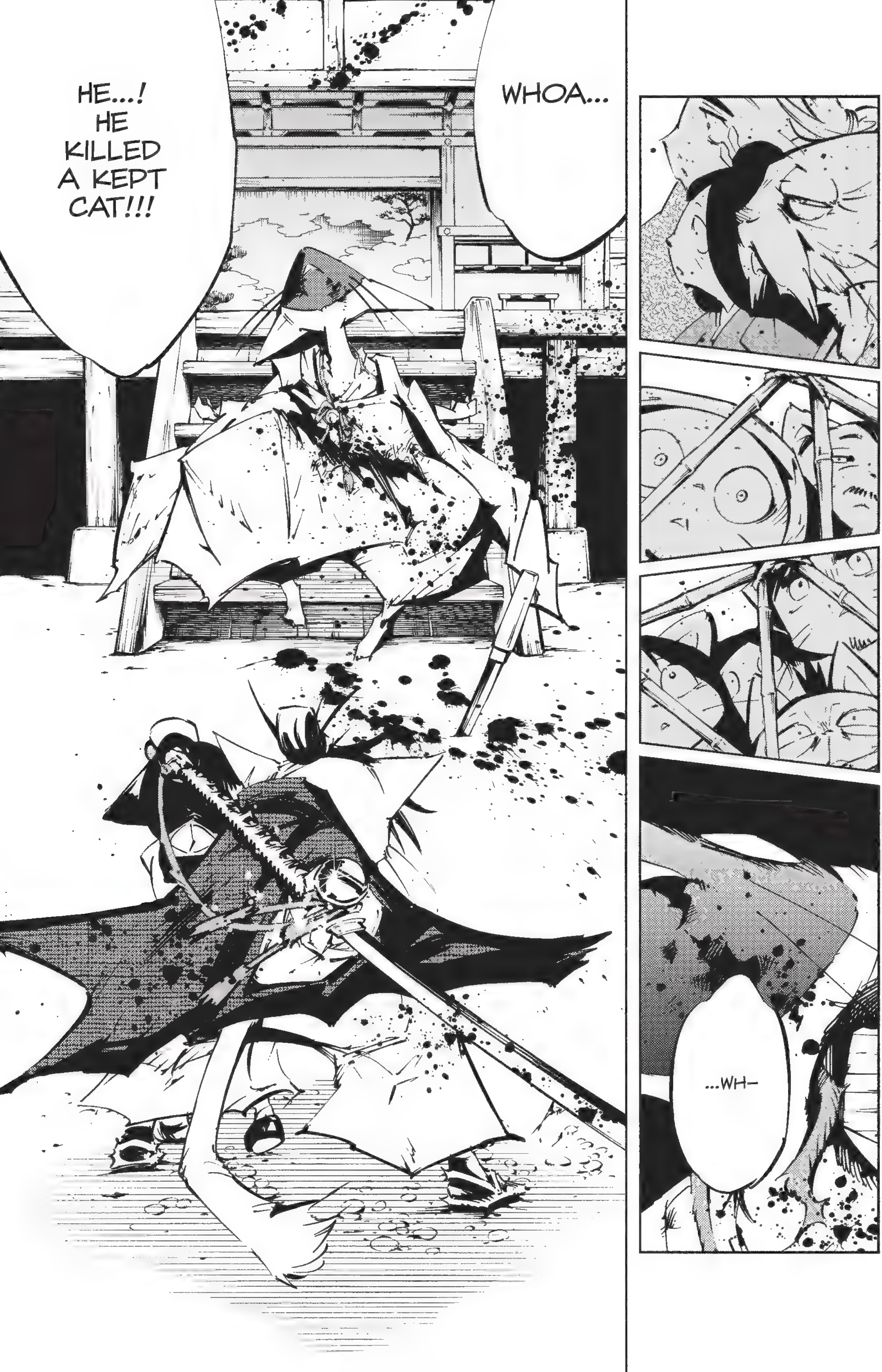

KA-KING
HE BLOCKED IT!
NO, NOT YET!
THE L & R BROTHERS!
STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP
THE TWO ATTACK AS ONE!!!

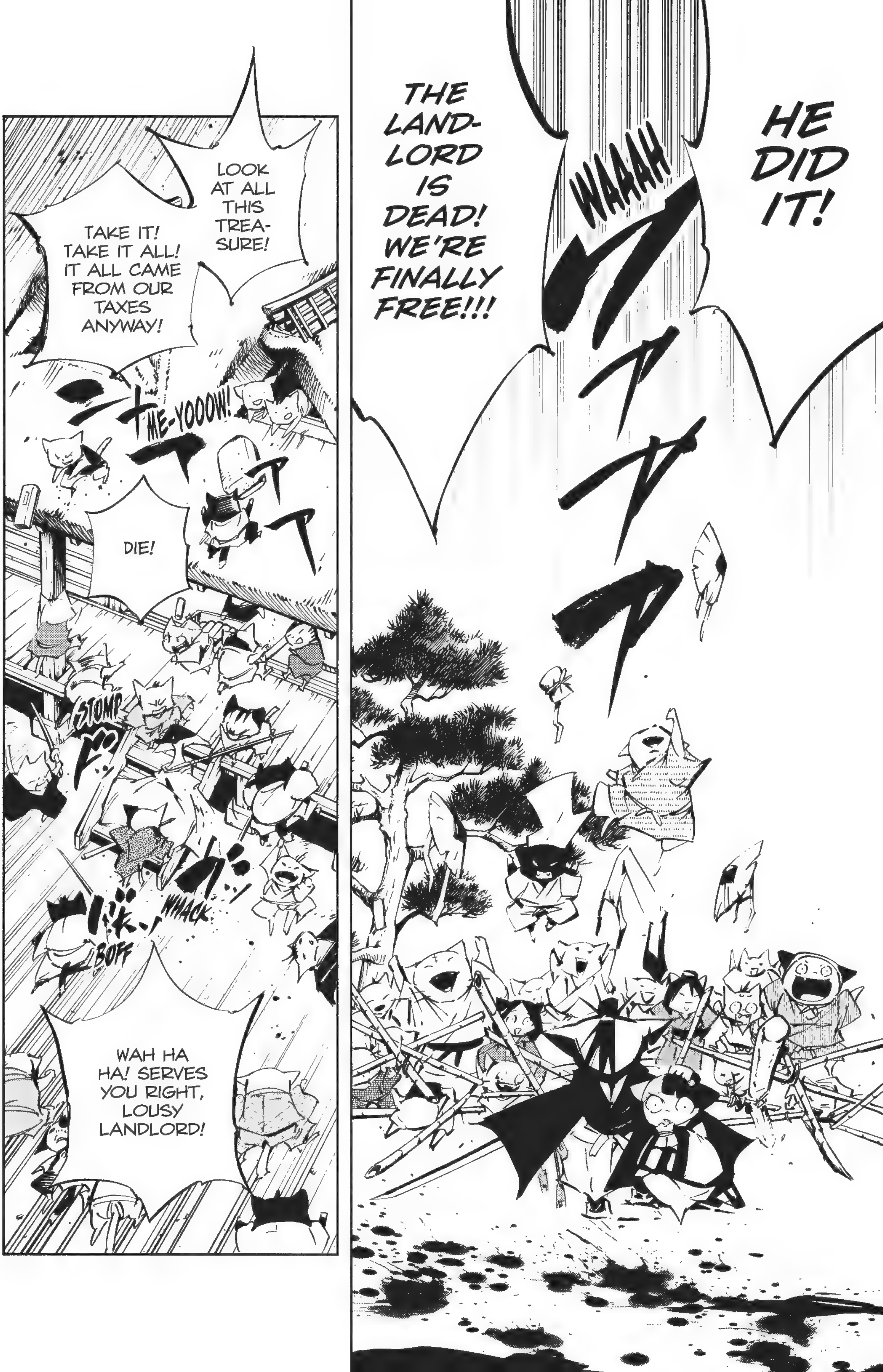

...SO WHAT OF YOU?
ARE YOU PROUD OF YOUR PATH, BIG GUY?
SH...! SHUT UP!!!
QUIT PHILOSOPHIZING AND LET ME CRUSH YOU, LITTLE TOM!
IF IDEALS COULD FILL OUR BELLIES, NO ONE WOULD GO HUNGRY!!!
IDEALS ARE *RISŌ*–OUR LOVE (*SŌ*) FOR NATURE (*RI*).
GRRNG
...ANOTHER THING MY MASTER TOLD ME–
SHOULD YOU DIE BEFORE YOU REACH THE END OF YOUR PATH, IF THAT PATH WAS ONE YOU CAN TAKE PRIDE IN, YOU WILL HAVE NOTHING TO REGRET.
GRRNG
GRRN

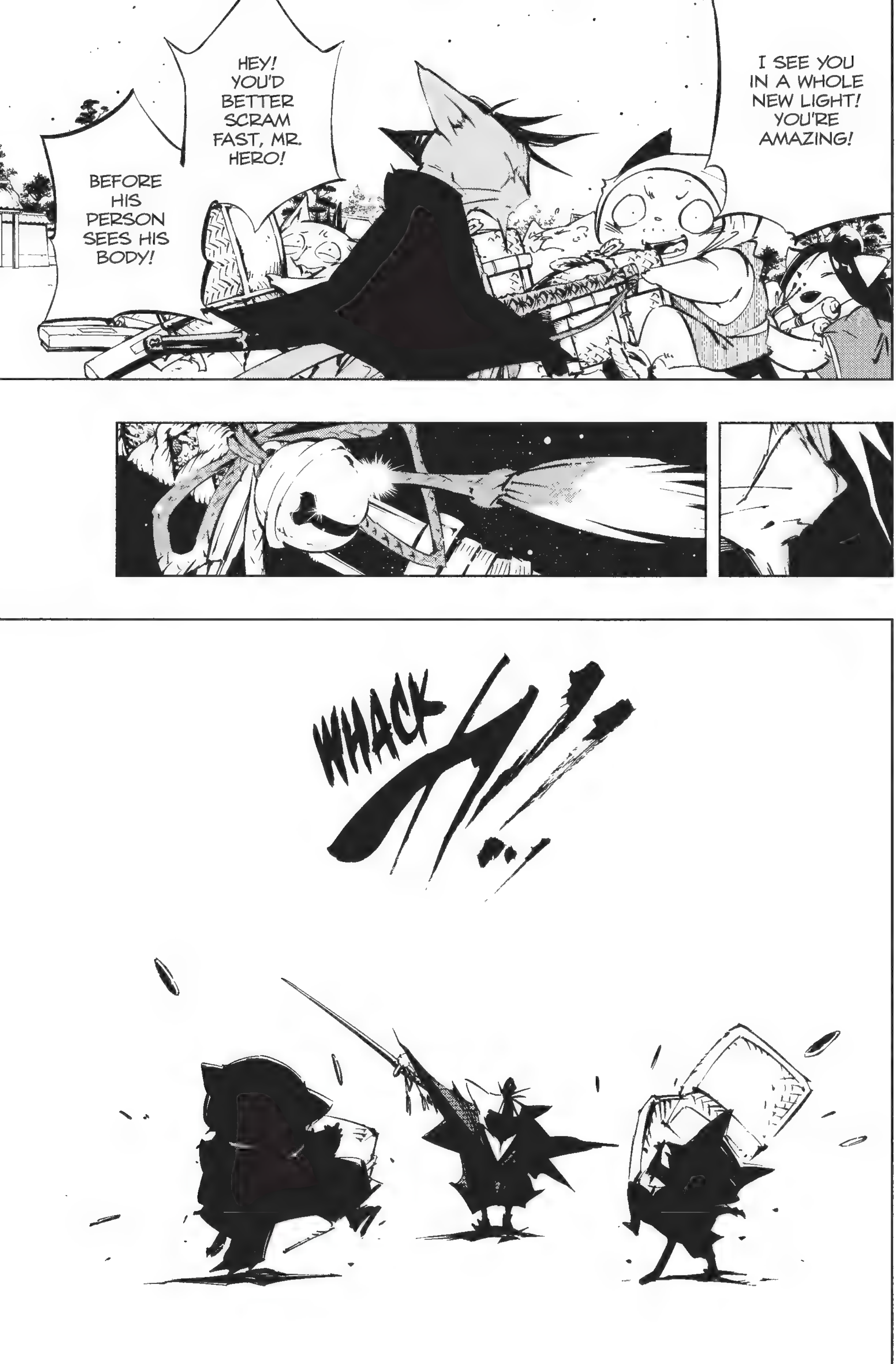

Z-ZSH
NATURE IS THE PHYSICAL WORLD. NOTHING IS MORE NATURAL.
NGH...
GU-HAH...?!
...
SIAME-CHIKA.
DO YOU INTEND TO CONTINUE THIS QUARREL?

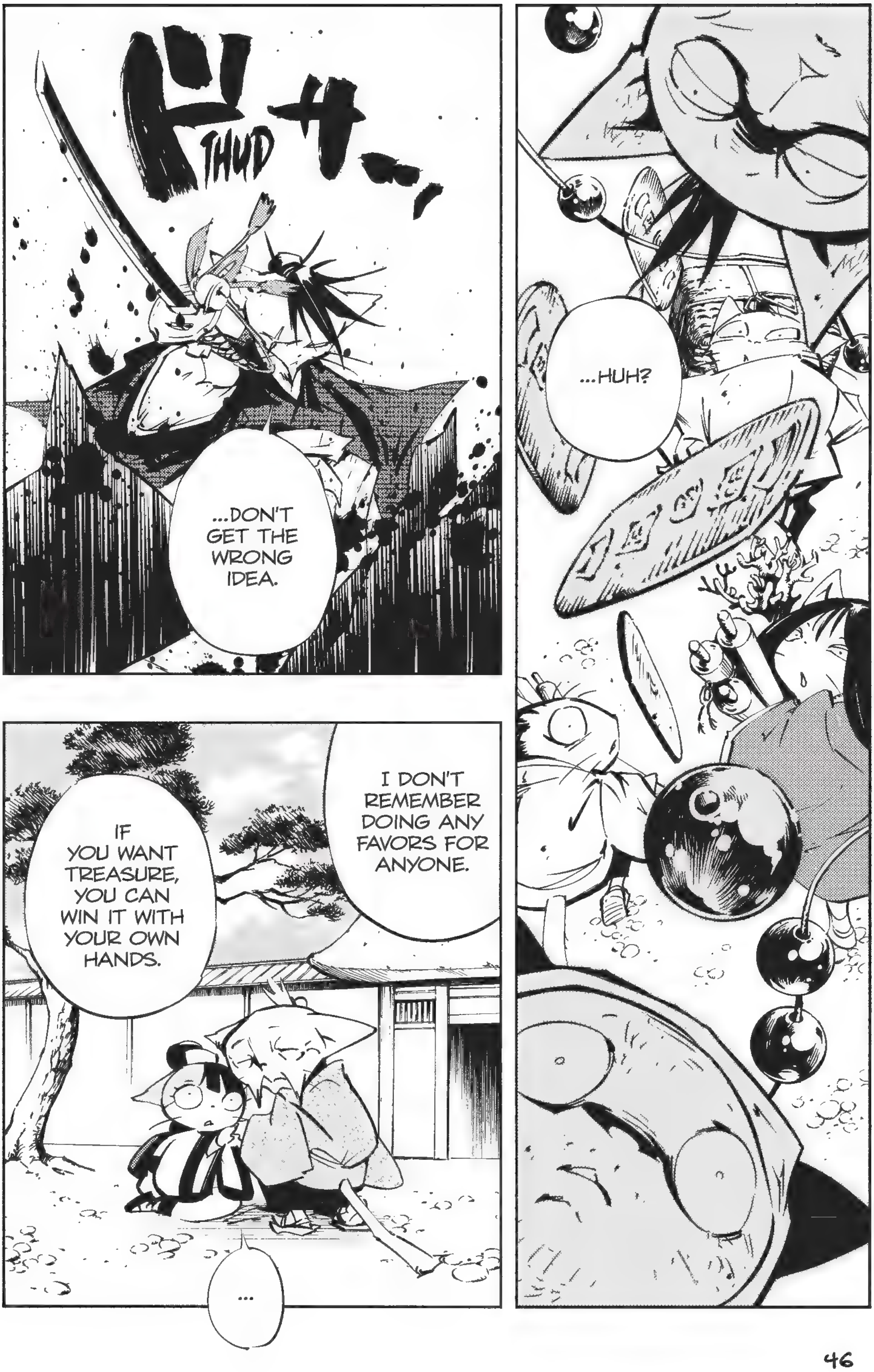

D...DAMN YOU!
DON'T YOU TALK DOWN TO ME!
YOU CAN'T KILL ME!
IF YOU KILL ME, MY PERSON'S DIVINE PUNISHMENT WILL STRIKE YOU **AND** THIS KITTEN!
EEK!
LUNGE
...OMIKE.
THE FACT IS, DEATH MAY BE EASIER THAN LIVING IN THIS WORLD.
BUT I MUST ASK– ARE YOU READY TO BE FREE?
WHAAA ?!
...
...! NORA-CHIYO-SAMA...

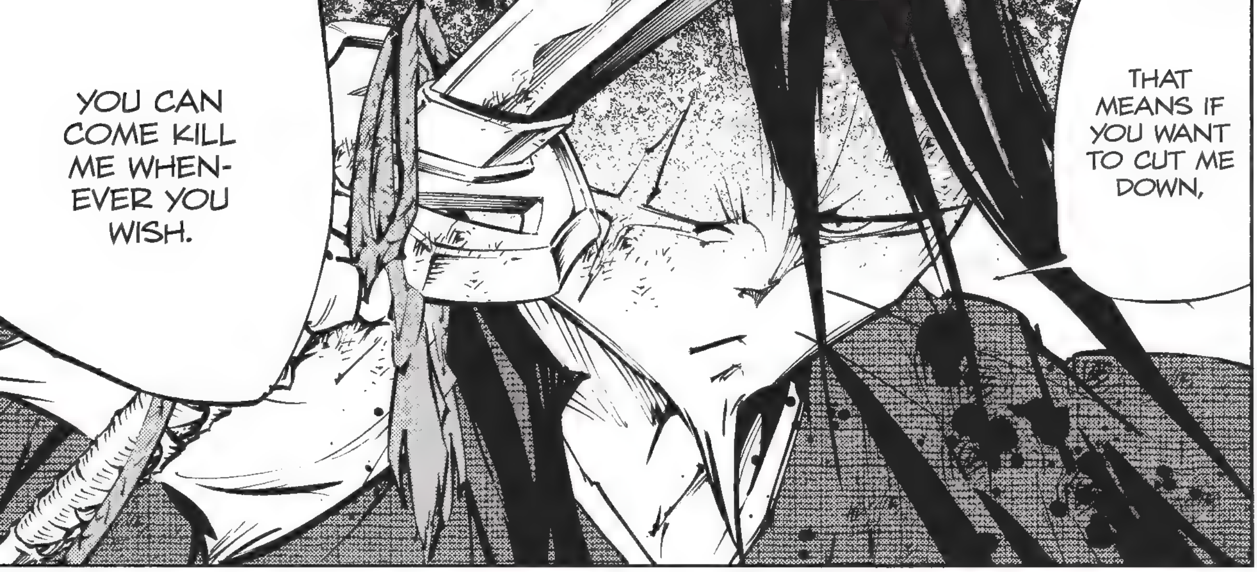

OF COURSE I AM!
THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A STRAY!
HEH.
SLASH

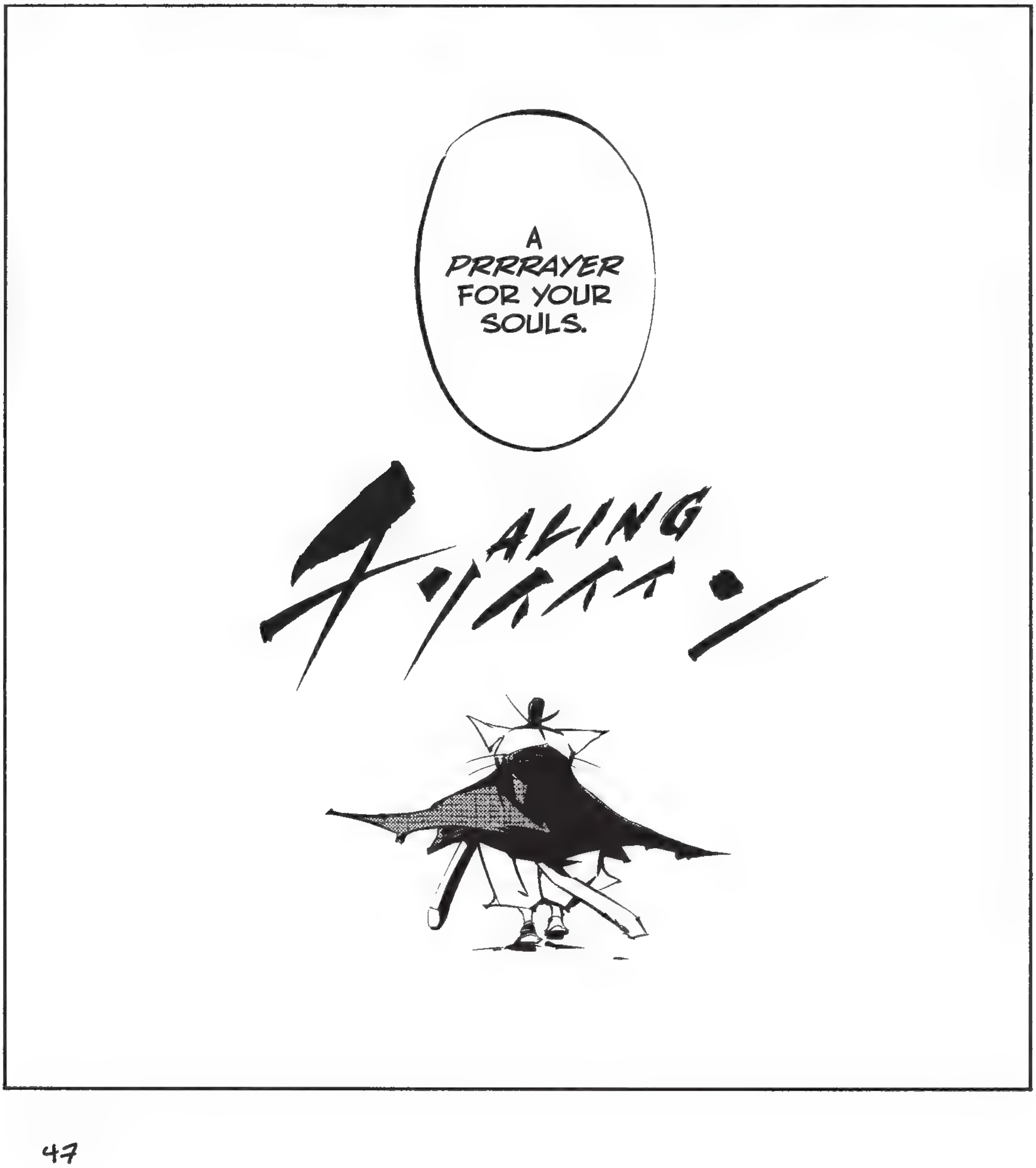

...WH–
WHOA...
HE...! HE KILLED A KEPT CAT!!!


HE DID IT!
THE LANDLORD IS DEAD! WE'RE FINALLY FREE!!!
WAAAH
LOOK AT ALL THIS TREASURE!
TAKE IT! TAKE IT ALL! IT ALL CAME FROM OUR TAXES ANYWAY!
ME-YOOOW!
DIE!
STOMP
WHACK
BOFF
WAH HA HA! SERVES YOU RIGHT, LOUSY LANDLORD!


I SEE YOU IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT! YOU'RE AMAZING!
HEY! YOU'D BETTER SCRAM FAST, MR. HERO!
BEFORE HIS PERSON SEES HIS BODY!
WHACK


...HUH?
ドサー
THUD
...DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA.
I DON'T REMEMBER DOING ANY FAVORS FOR ANYONE.
IF YOU WANT TREASURE, YOU CAN WIN IT WITH YOUR OWN HANDS.
...

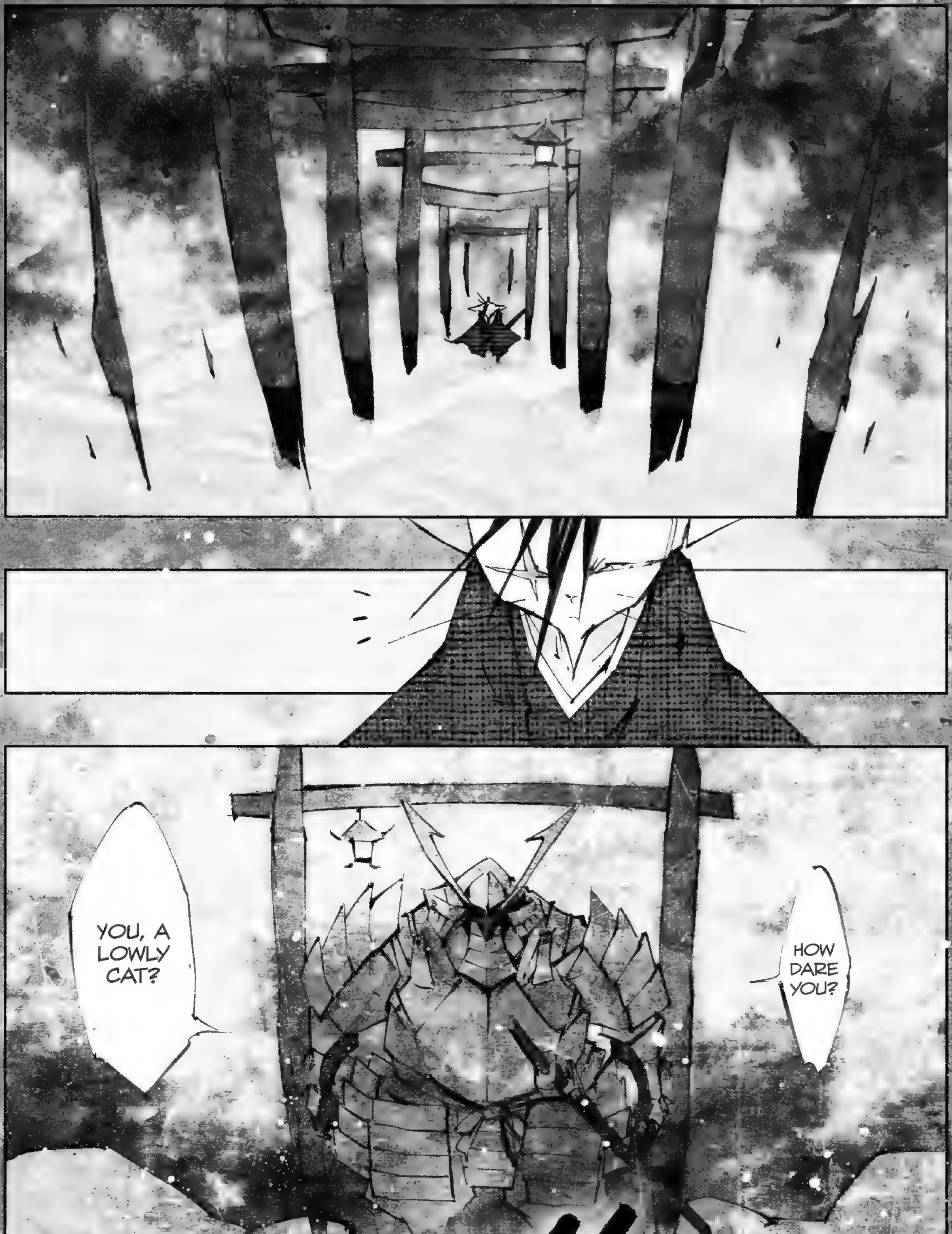

THAT MEANS IF YOU WANT TO CUT ME DOWN,
YOU CAN COME KILL ME WHENEVER YOU WISH.

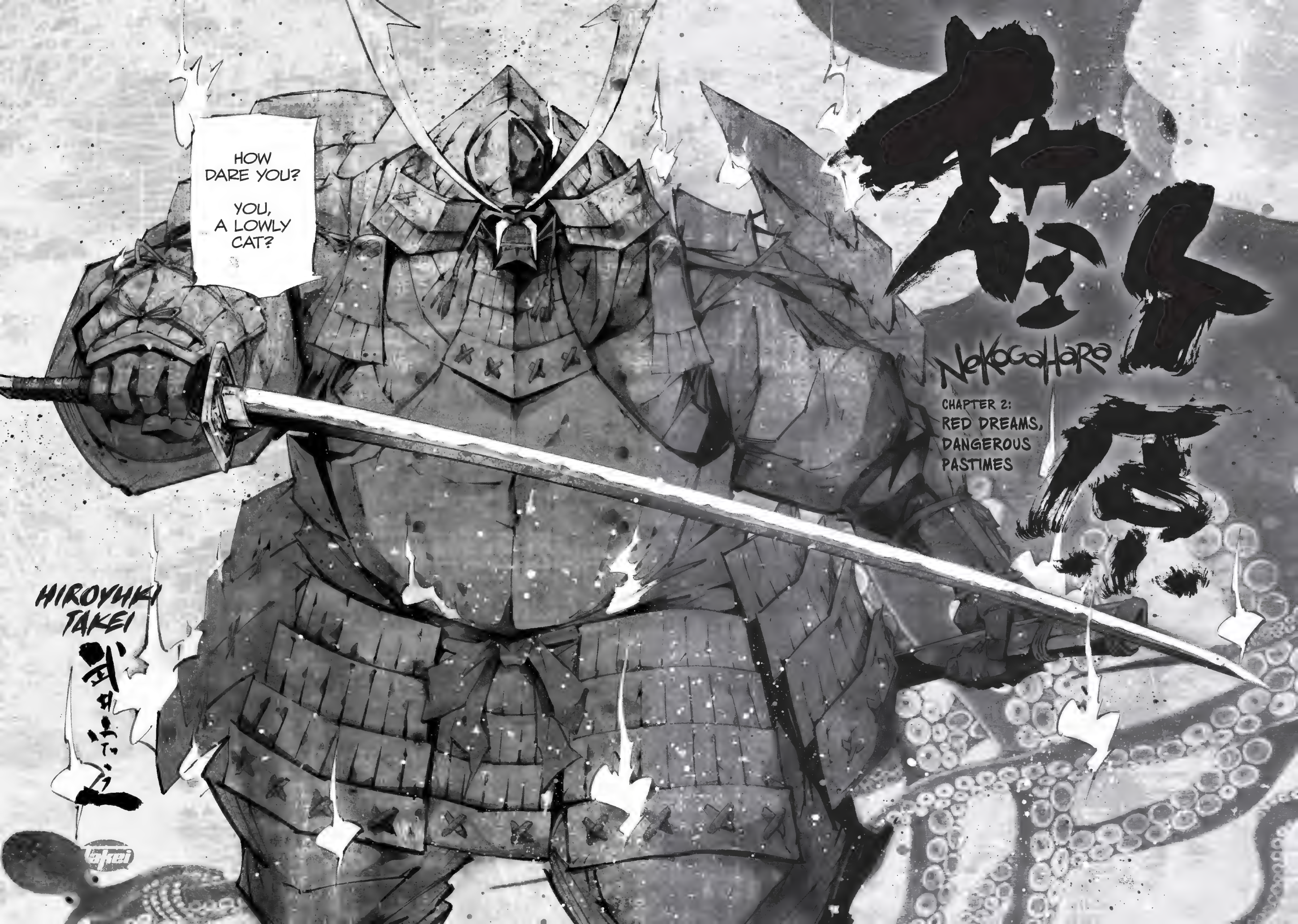

A *PRRRAYER* FOR YOUR SOULS.
ALING

猫ヶ原

NeKoGaHaRa

ネコガハラ

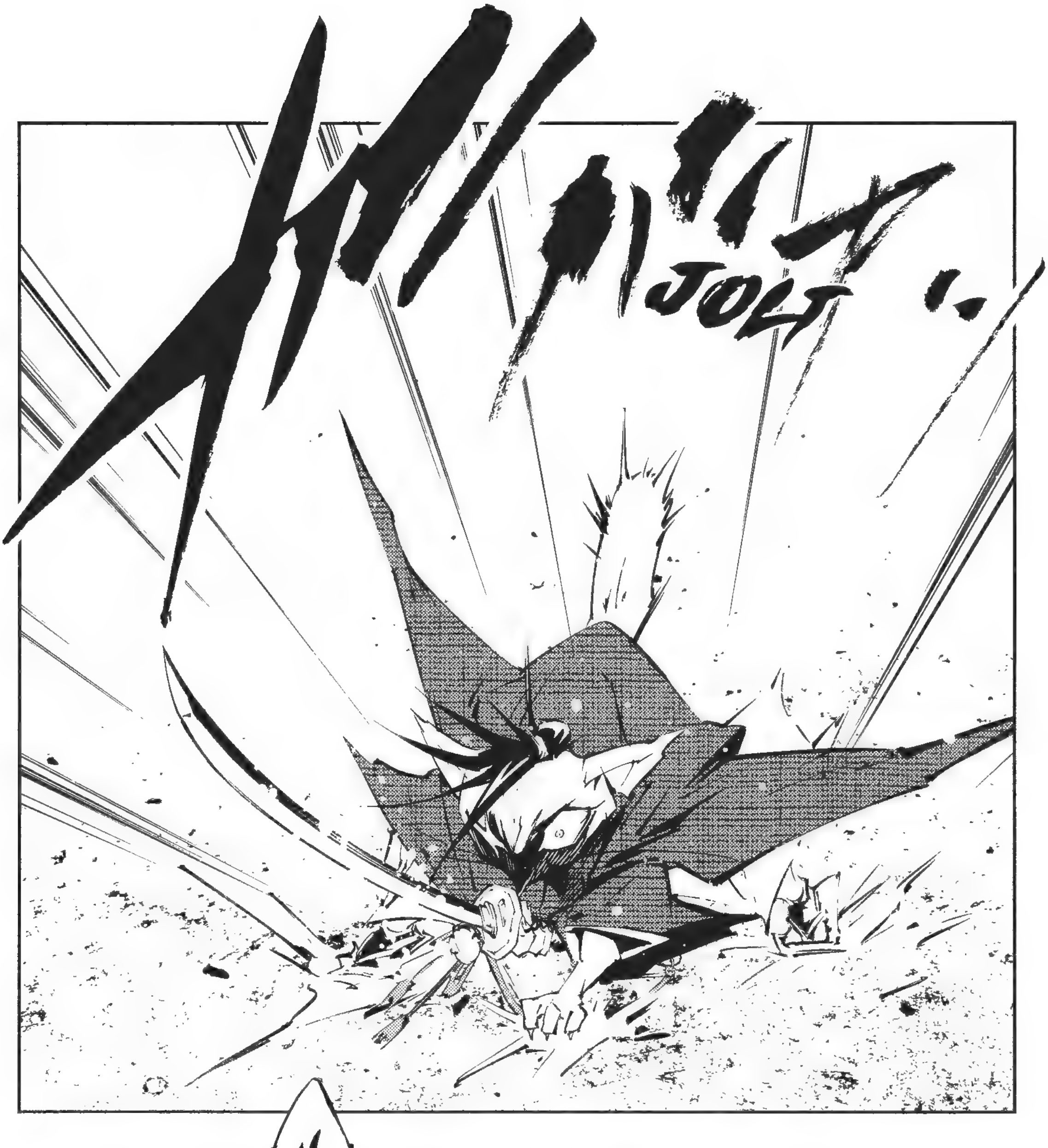

HOW DARE YOU?
YOU, A LOWLY CAT?
CLANK

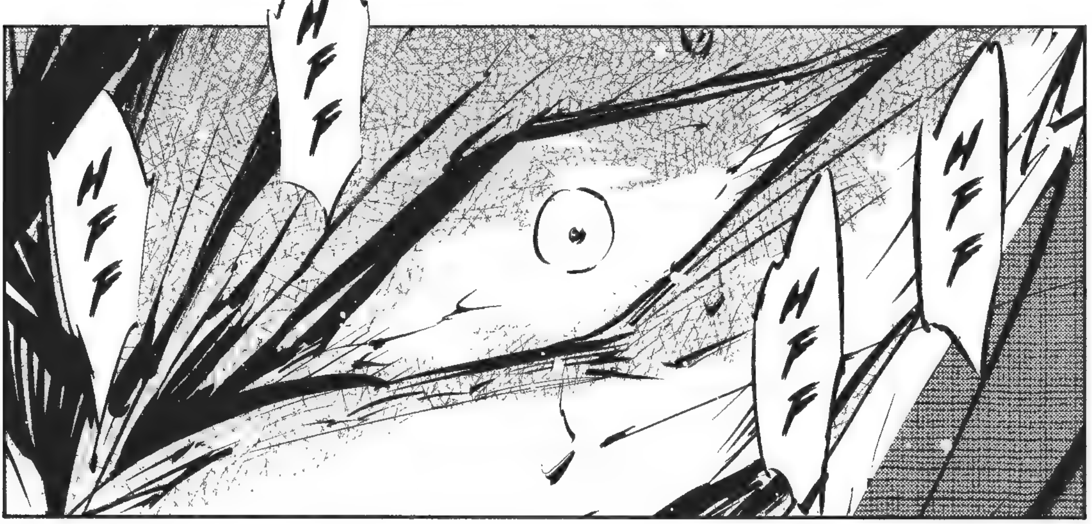

NEKOGAHARA
CHAPTER 2: RED DREAMS, DANGEROUS PASTIMES
HOW DARE YOU? YOU, A LOWLY CAT?
HIROYUKI TAKEI
Takei

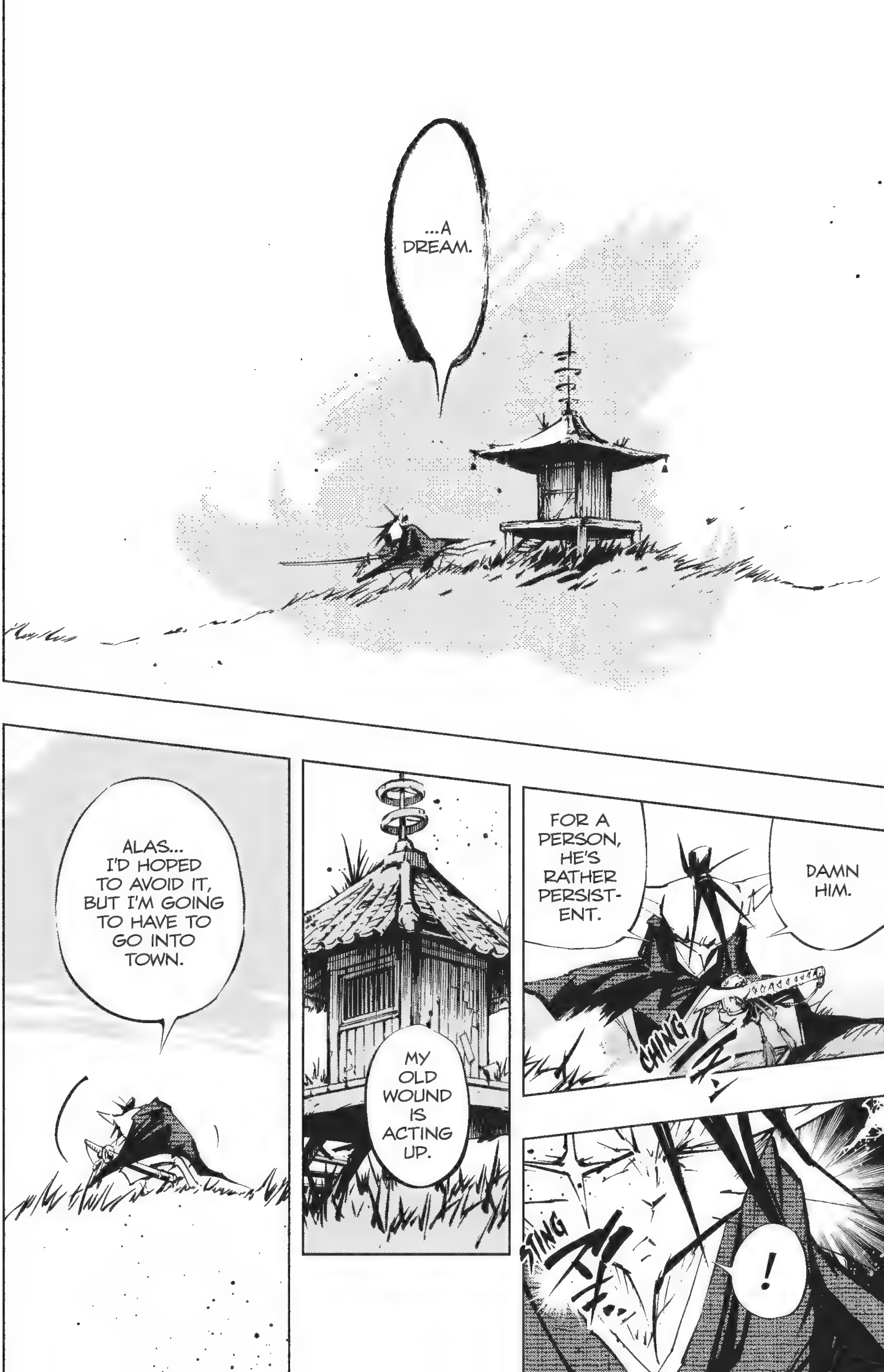
猫ヶ原

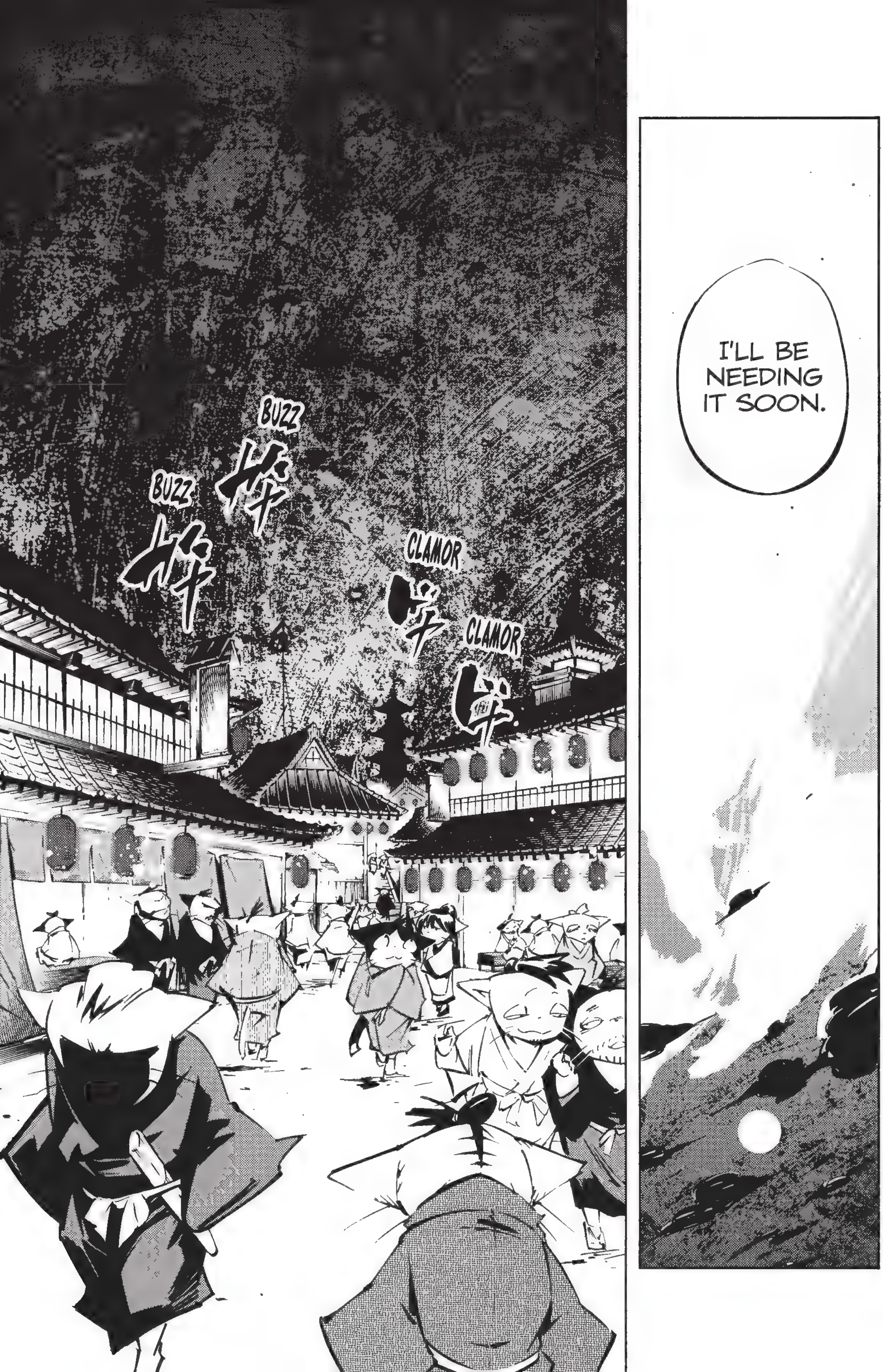
NeKoGaHara

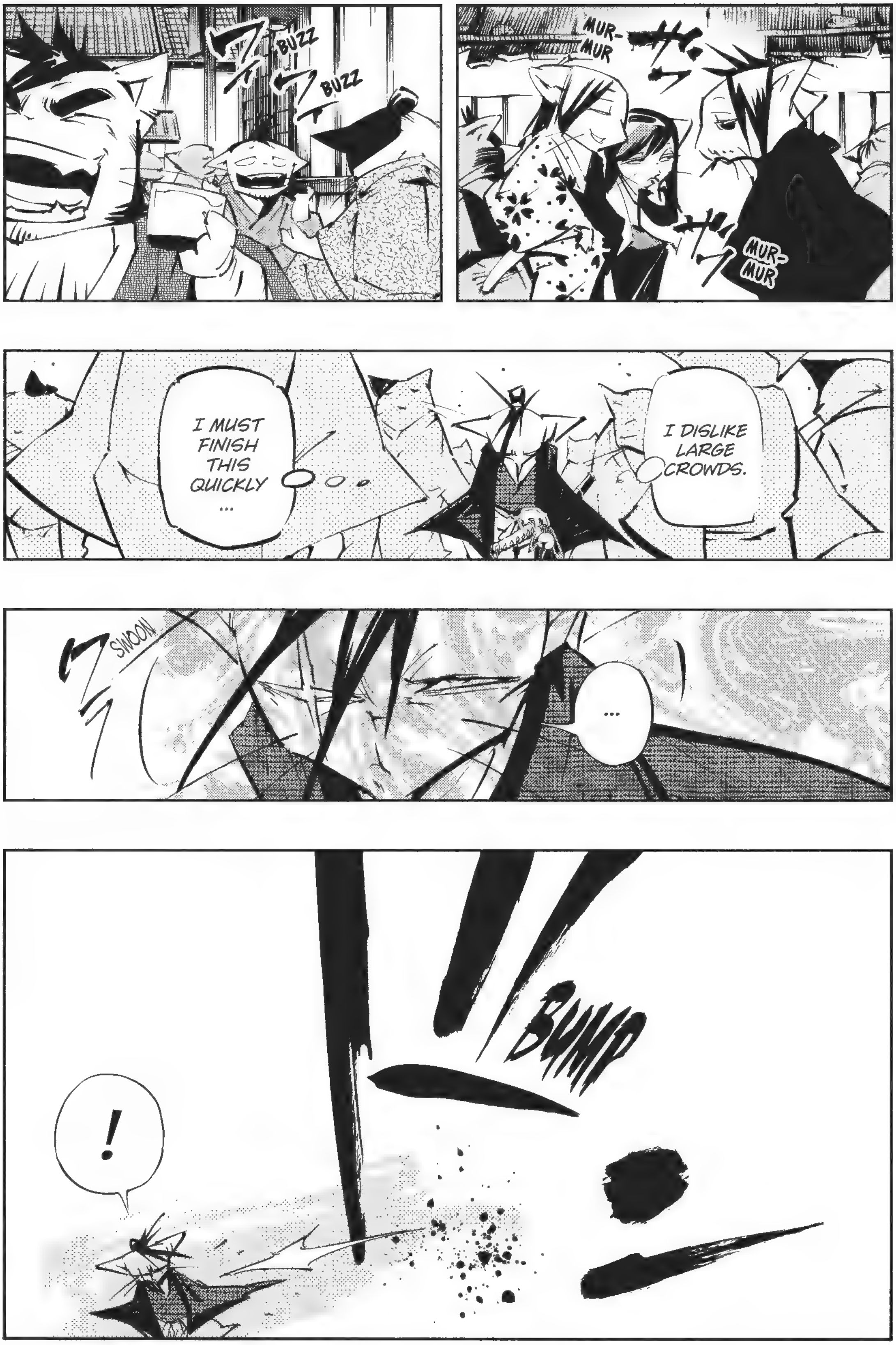
ネコガハラ

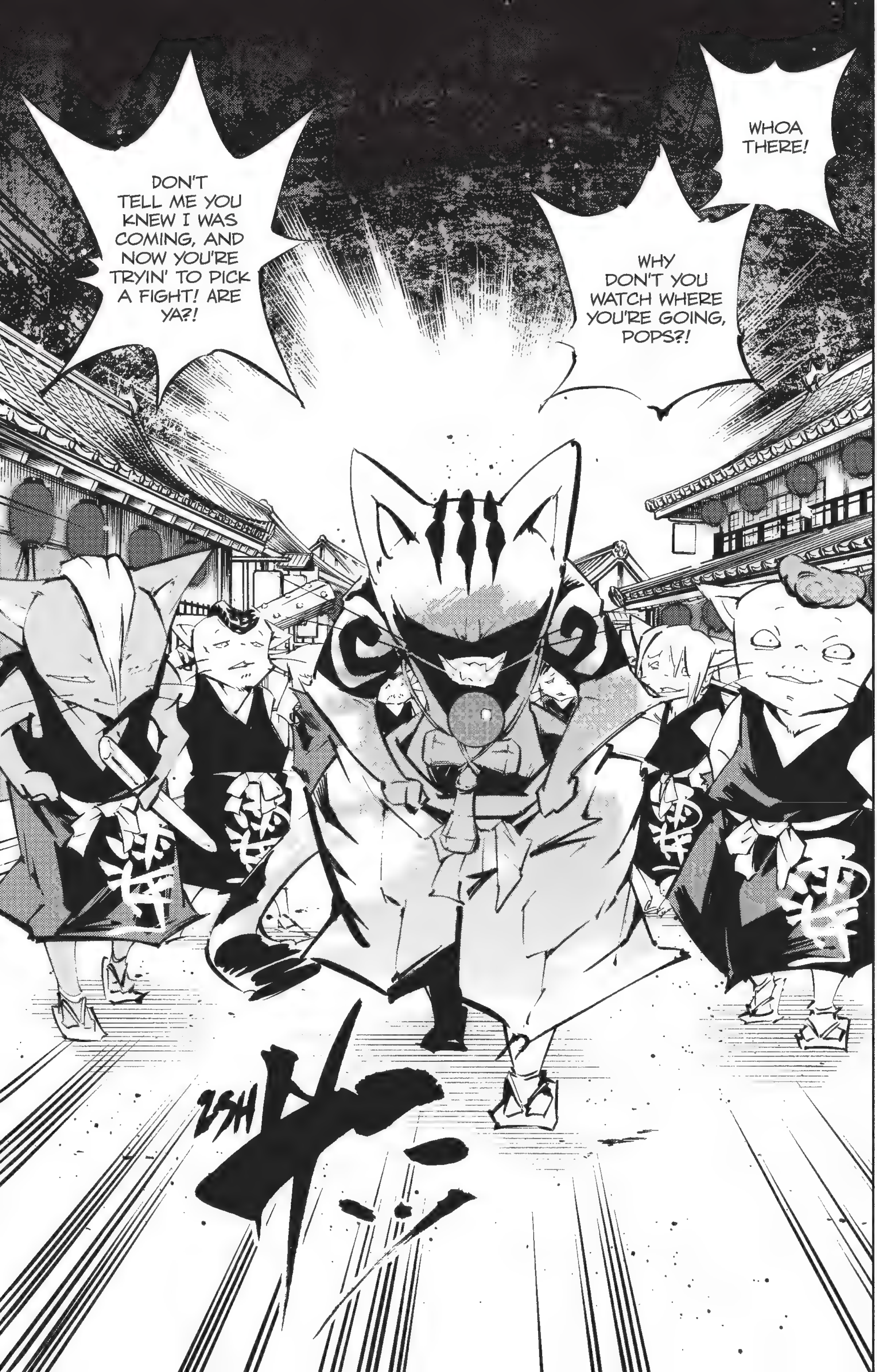

JOLT

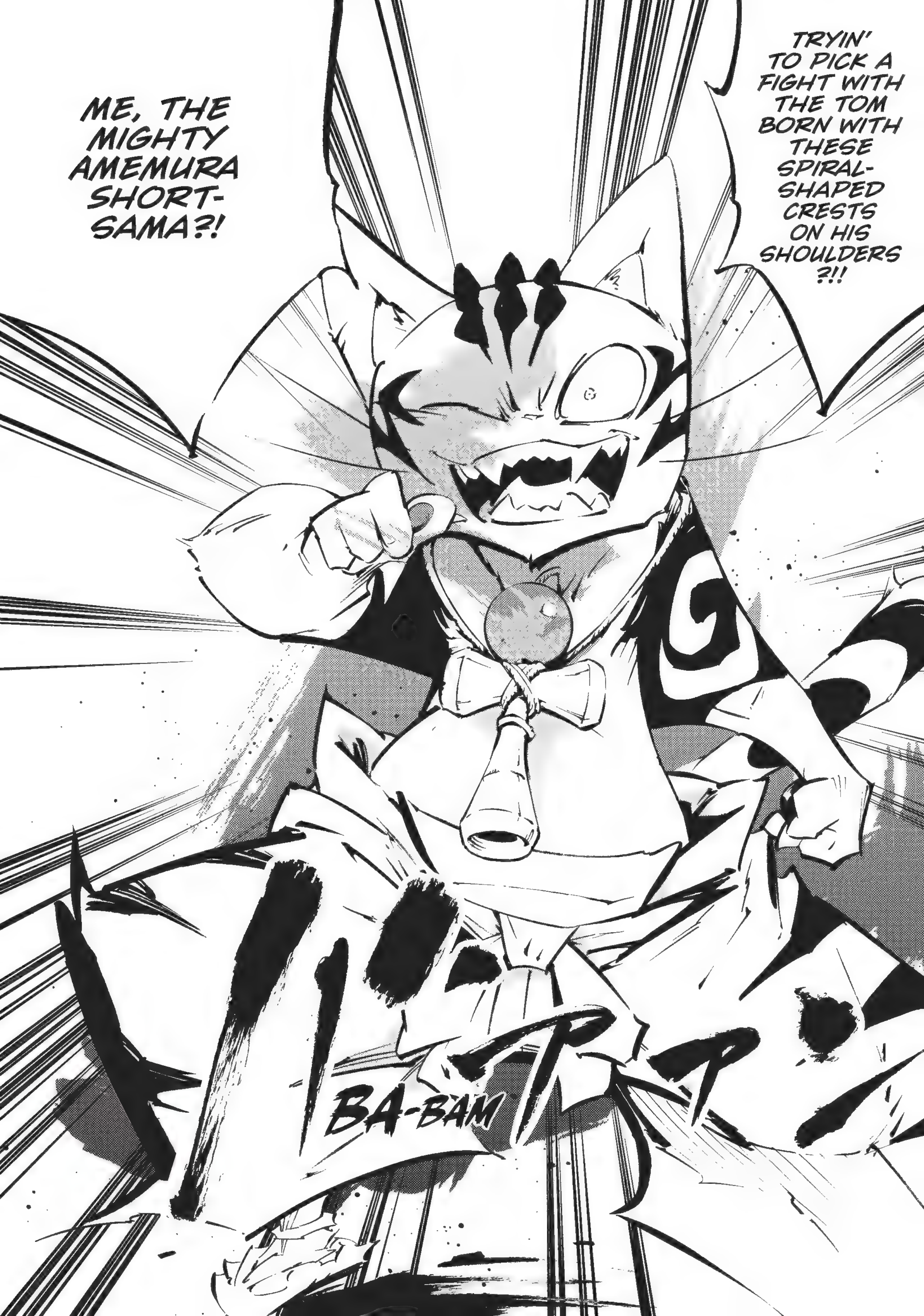

HFF
HFF
HFF
HFF

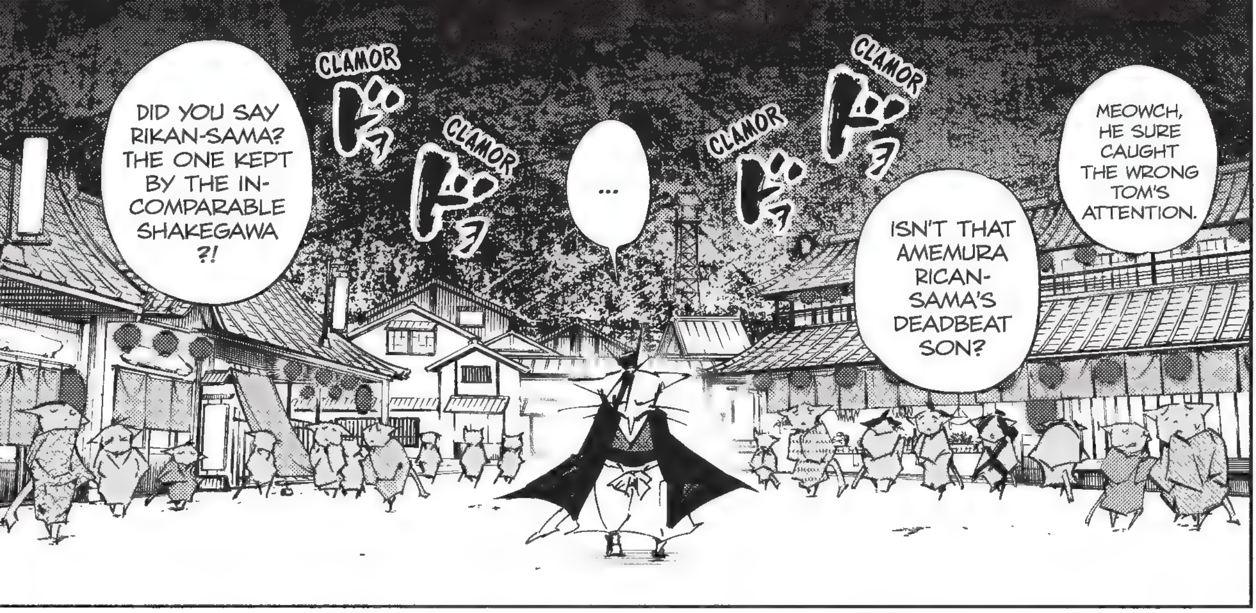

...A DREAM.
DAMN HIM.
FOR A PERSON, HE'S RATHER PERSISTENT.
CHING
STING
!
MY OLD WOUND IS ACTING UP.
ALAS... I'D HOPED TO AVOID IT, BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GO INTO TOWN.

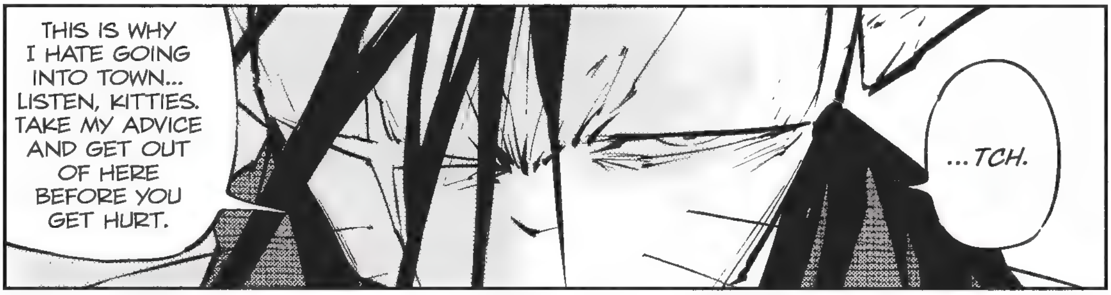

I'LL BE NEEDING IT SOON.
BUZZ
BUZZ
CLAMOR
CLAMOR

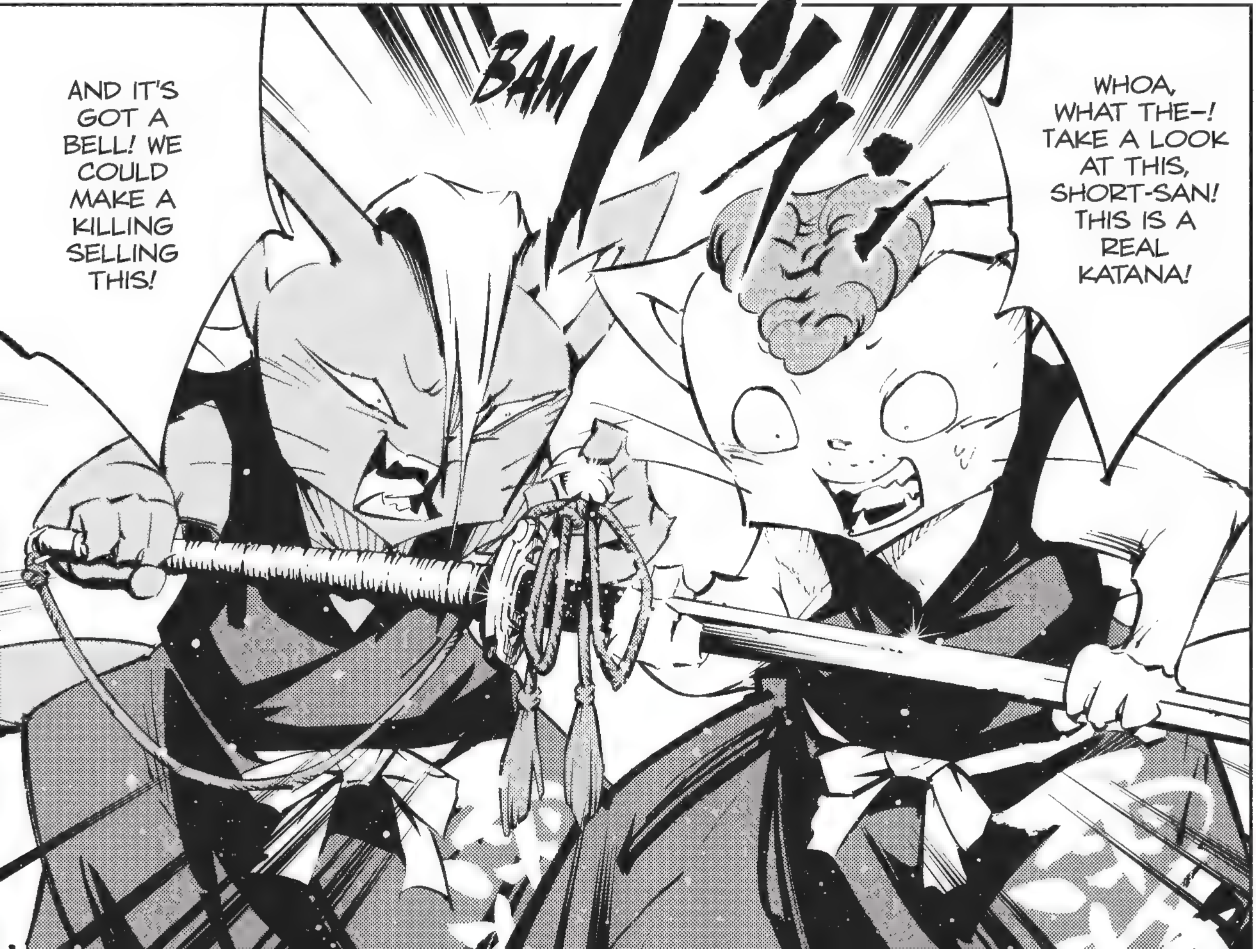

MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
BUZZ
BUZZ
I DISLIKE LARGE CROWDS.
I MUST FINISH THIS QUICKLY ...
SWOON
...
BUMP
!

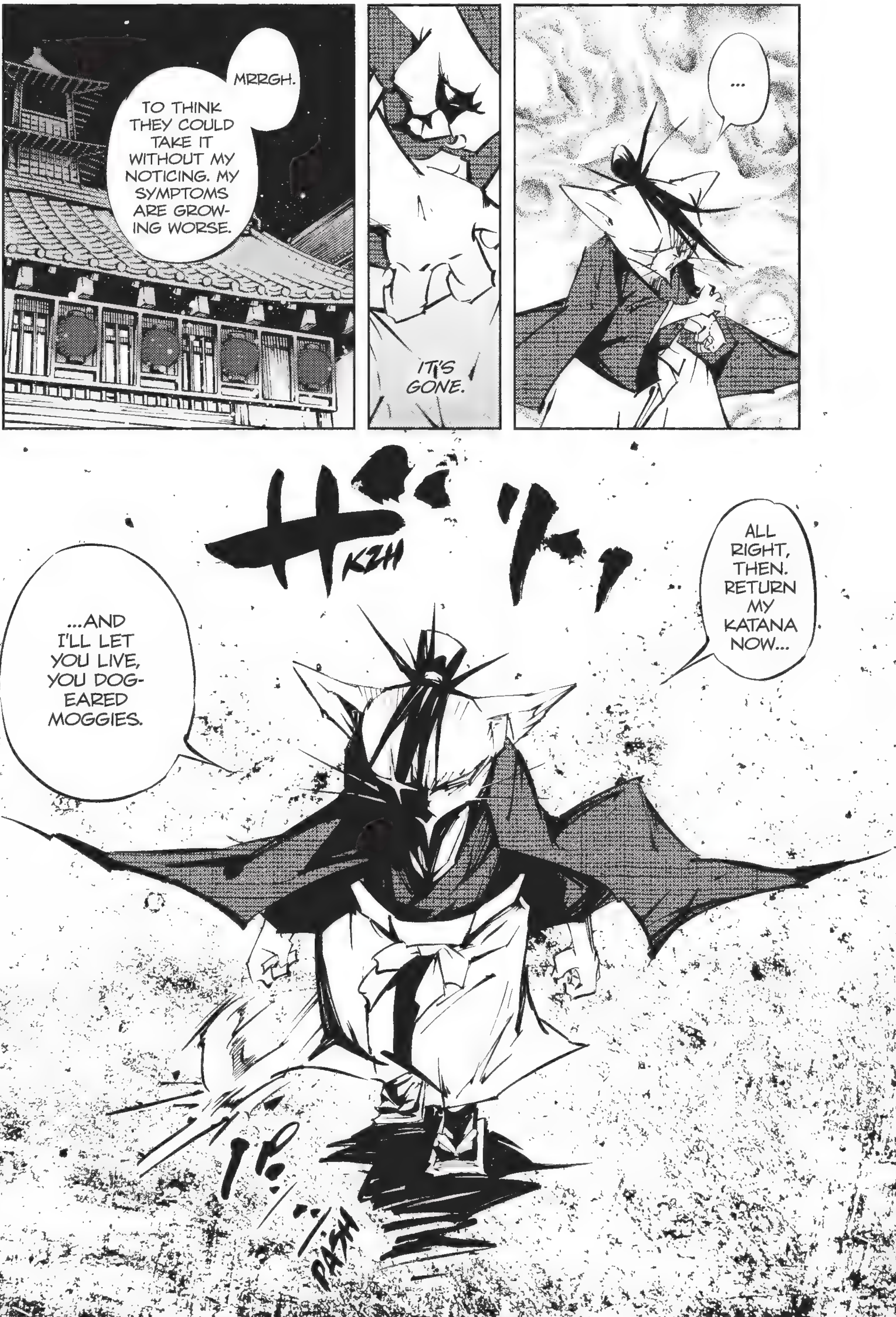

WHOA THERE!
WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, POPS?!
DON'T TELL ME YOU KNEW I WAS COMING, AND NOW YOU'RE TRYIN' TO PICK A FIGHT! ARE YA?!
ZSH

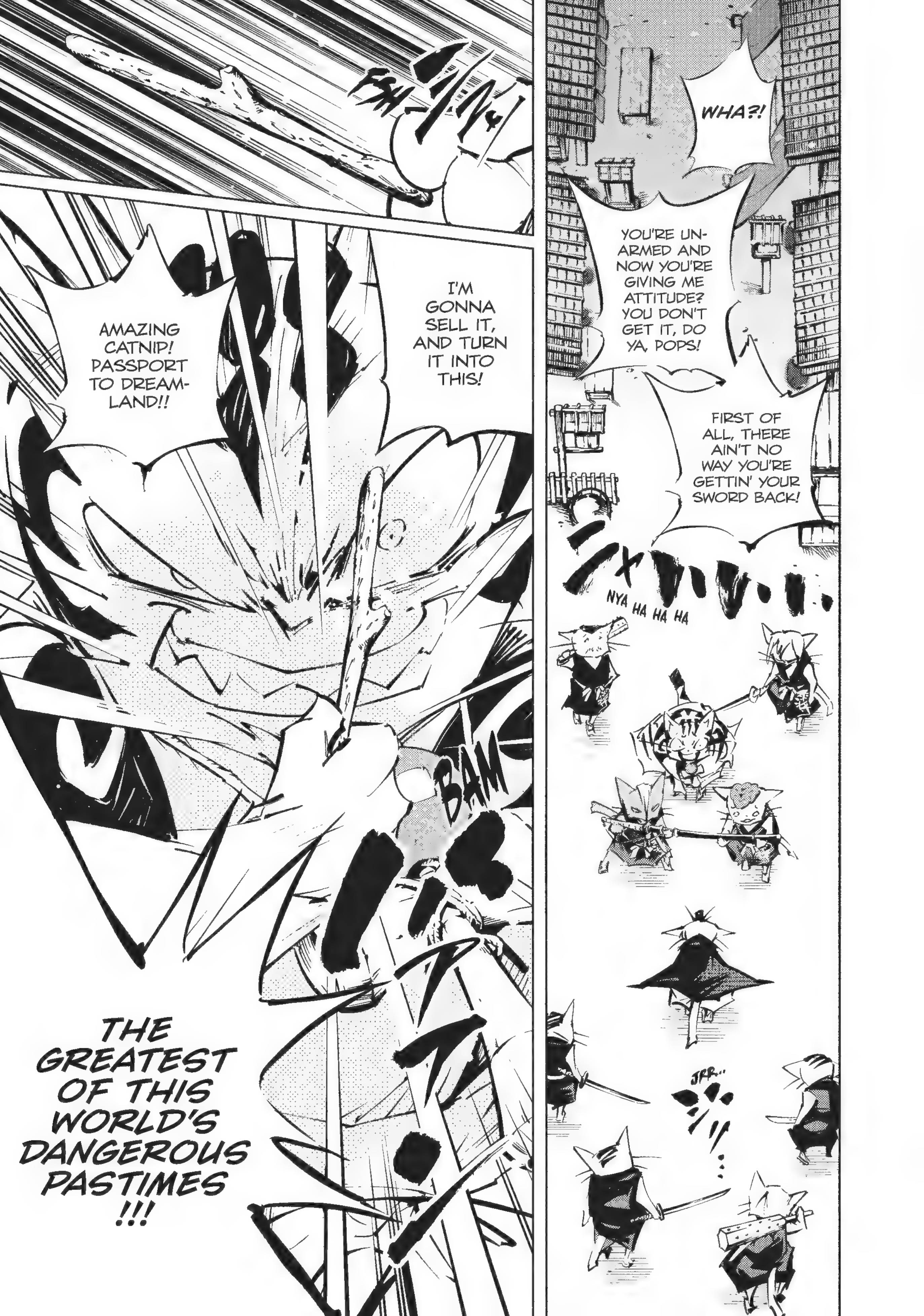

TRYIN' TO PICK A FIGHT WITH THE TOM BORN WITH THESE SPIRAL-SHAPED CRESTS ON HIS SHOULDERS ?!!
ME, THE MIGHTY AMEMURA SHORT-SAMA?!
BA-BAM

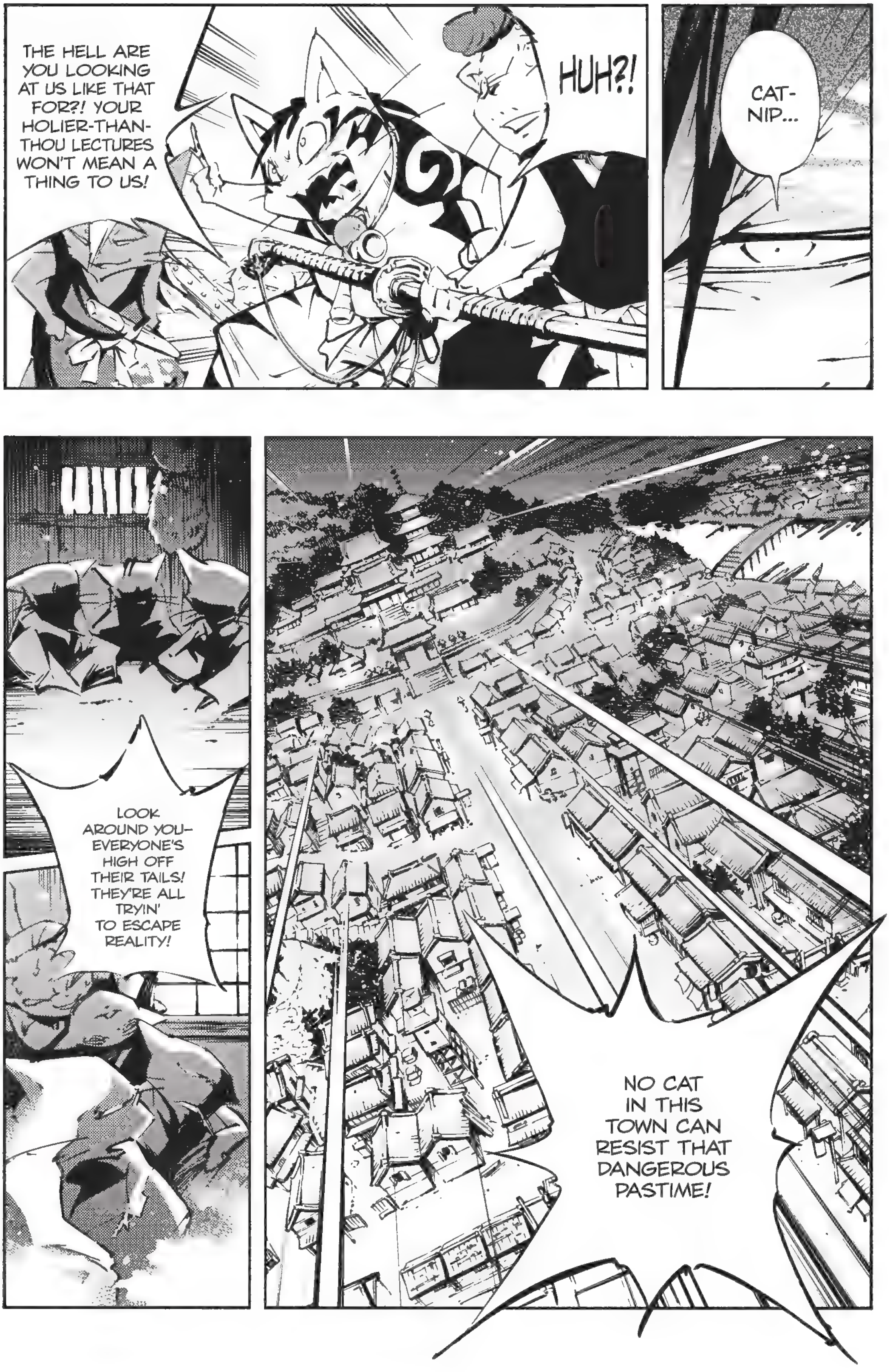

CLAMOR ドヨ
CLAMOR ドヨ
MEOWCH, HE SURE CAUGHT THE WRONG TOM'S ATTENTION.
ISN'T THAT AMEMURA RICAN-SAMA'S DEADBEAT SON?
...
CLAMOR ドヨ
CLAMOR ドヨ
DID YOU SAY RIKAN-SAMA? THE ONE KEPT BY THE INCOMPARABLE SHAKEGAWA?!

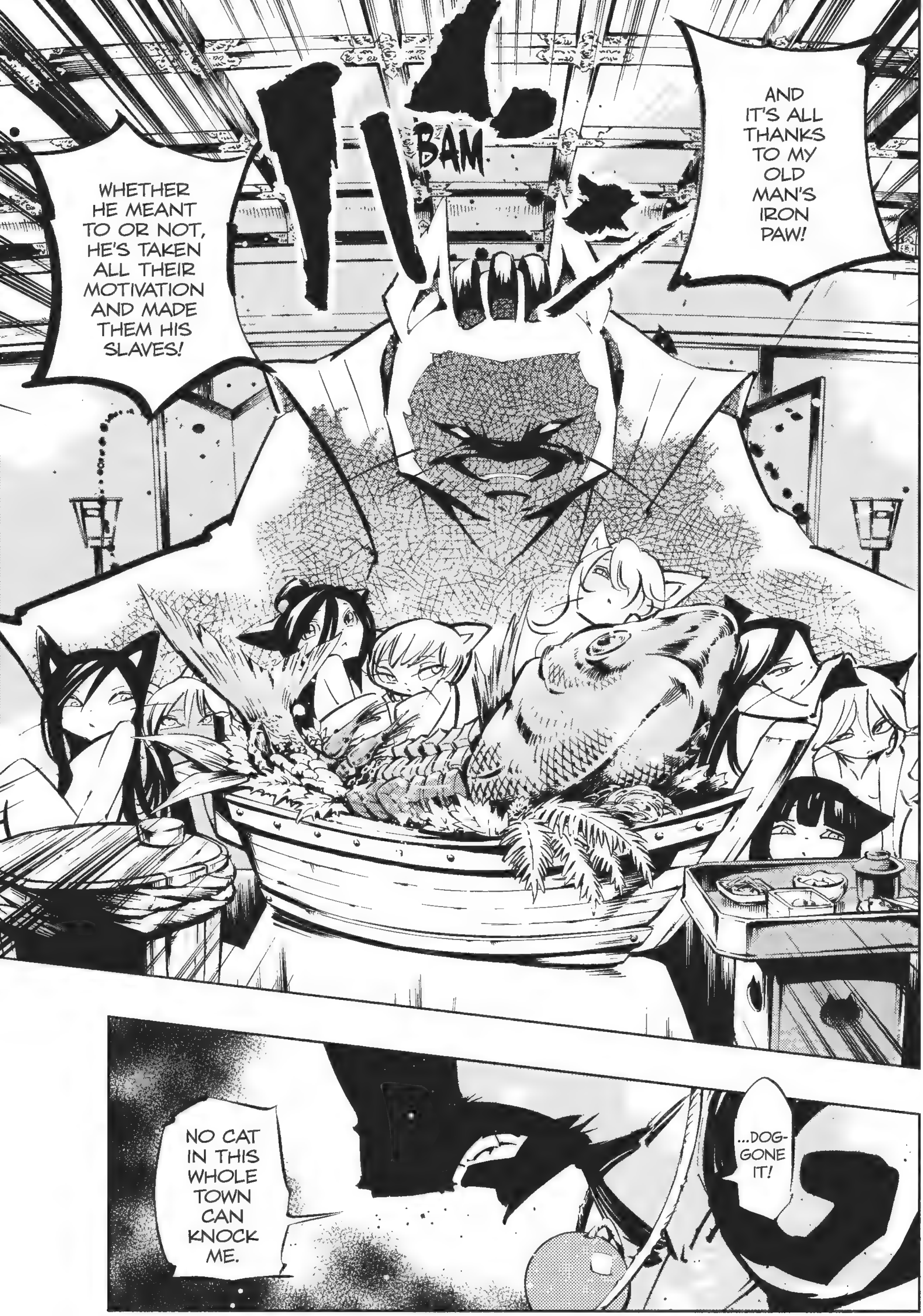

...TCH.
THIS IS WHY I HATE GOING INTO TOWN... LISTEN, KITTIES. TAKE MY ADVICE AND GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE YOU GET HURT.

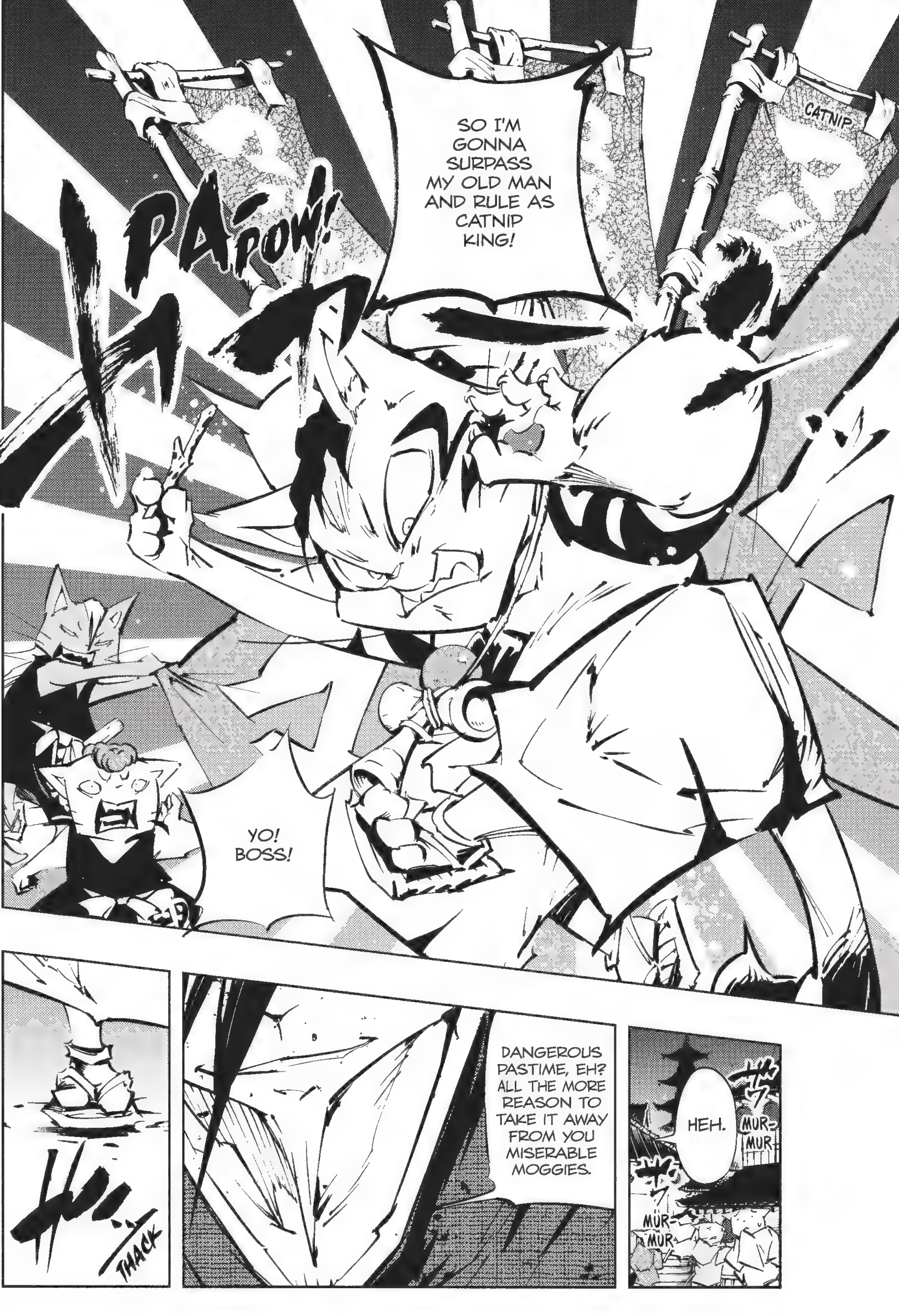

BAM バッ
WHOA, WHAT THE-! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, SHORT-SAN! THIS IS A REAL KATANA!
AND IT'S GOT A BELL! WE COULD MAKE A KILLING SELLING THIS!

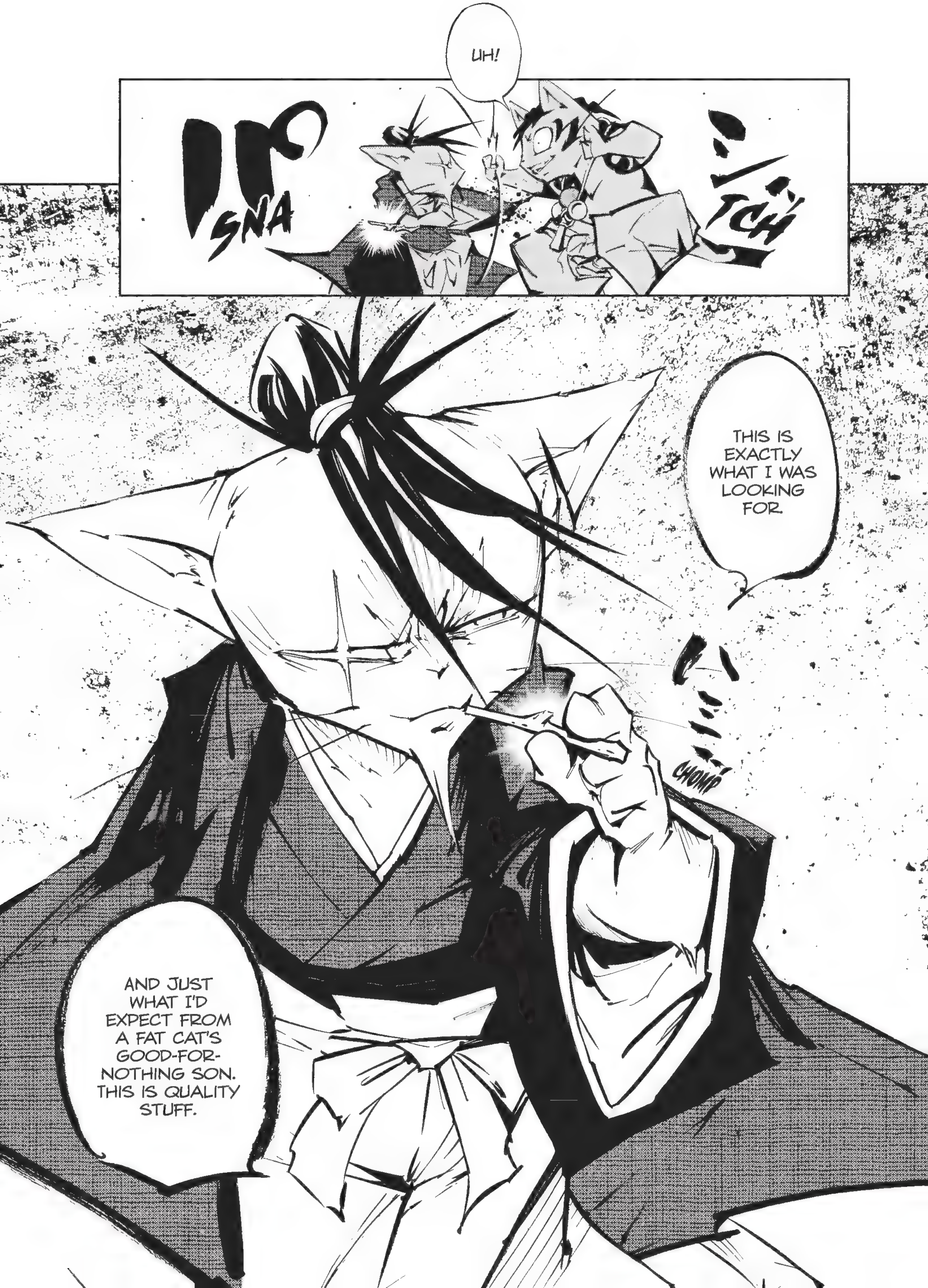

...
IT'S GONE.
MRRGH.
TO THINK THEY COULD TAKE IT WITHOUT MY NOTICING. MY SYMPTOMS ARE GROWING WORSE.
ザッ
KZH
ALL RIGHT, THEN. RETURN MY KATANA NOW...
...AND I'LL LET YOU LIVE, YOU DOG-EARED MOGGIES.
PASH

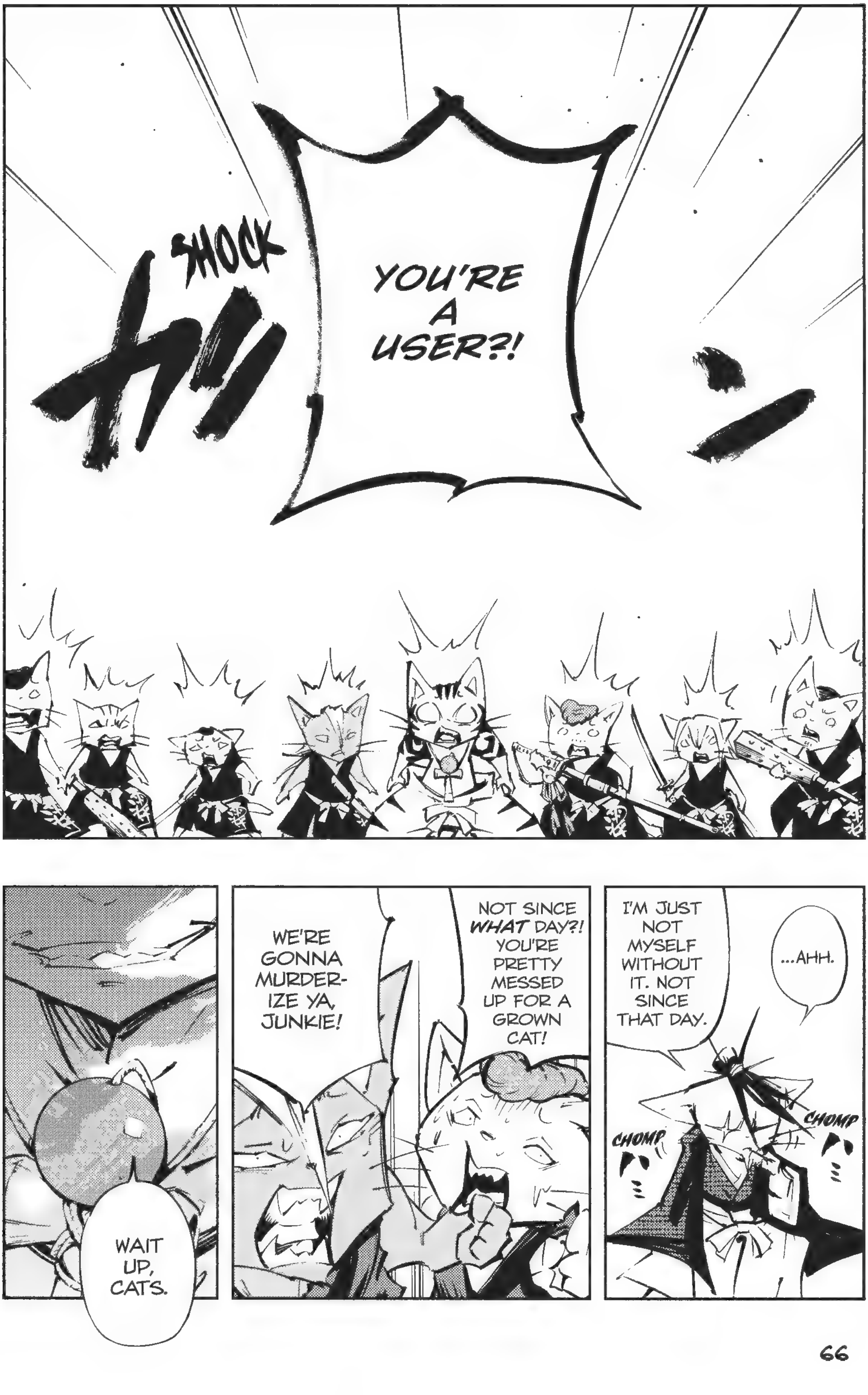

WHA?!
YOU'RE UNARMED AND NOW YOU'RE GIVING ME ATTITUDE? YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YA, POPS!
FIRST OF ALL, THERE AIN'T NO WAY YOU'RE GETTIN' YOUR SWORD BACK!
NYA HA HA HA
JRR...
FSH-
I'M GONNA SELL IT, AND TURN IT INTO THIS!
AMAZING CATNIP! PASSPORT TO DREAMLAND!!
BAM
THE GREATEST OF THIS WORLD'S DANGEROUS PASTIMES!!!

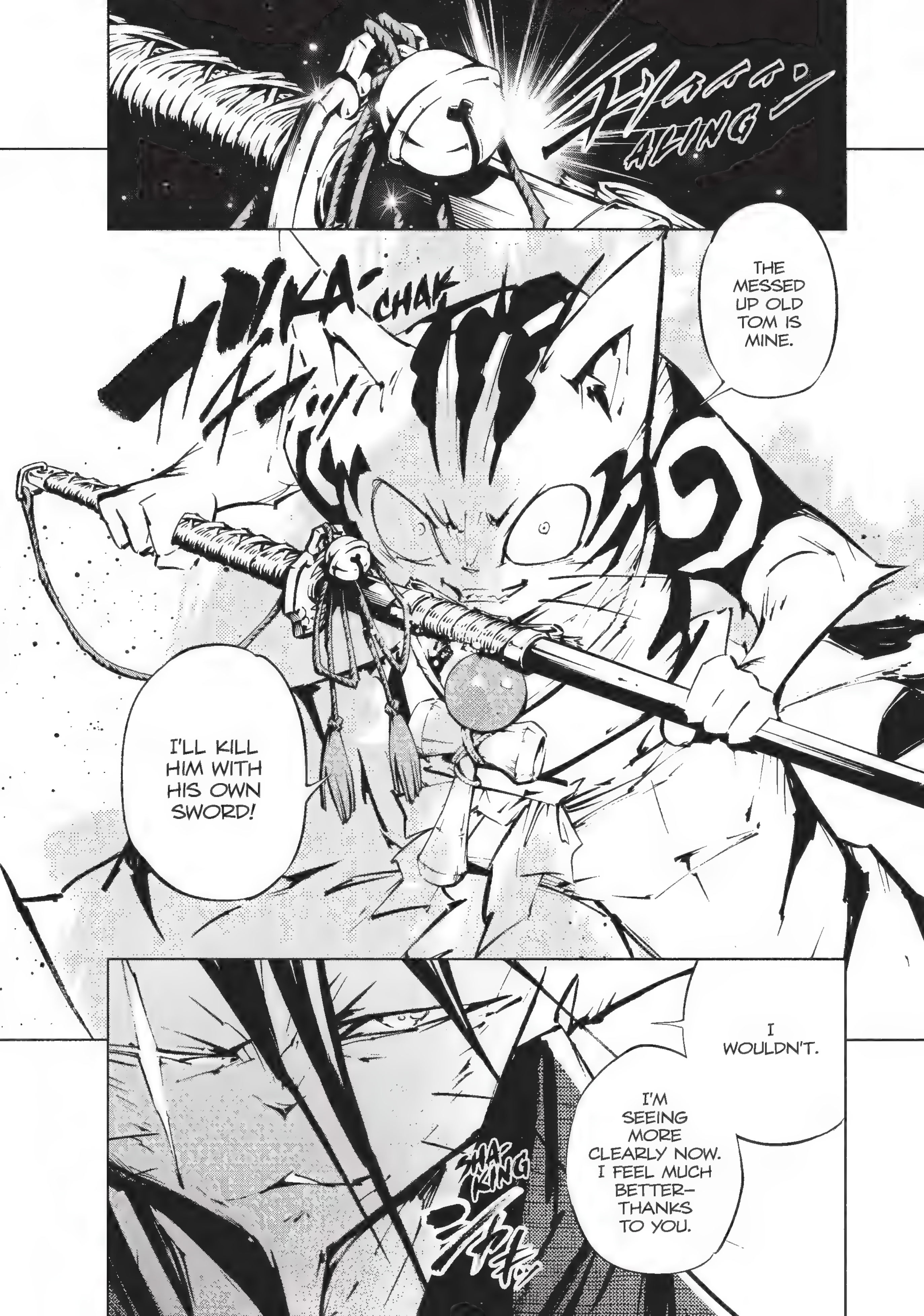

HUH?!
THE HELL ARE YOU LOOKING AT US LIKE THAT FOR?! YOUR HOLIER-THAN-THOU LECTURES WON'T MEAN A THING TO US!
CATNIP...
LOOK AROUND YOU—EVERYONE'S HIGH OFF THEIR TAILS! THEY'RE ALL TRYIN' TO ESCAPE REALITY!
NO CAT IN THIS TOWN CAN RESIST THAT DANGEROUS PASTIME!

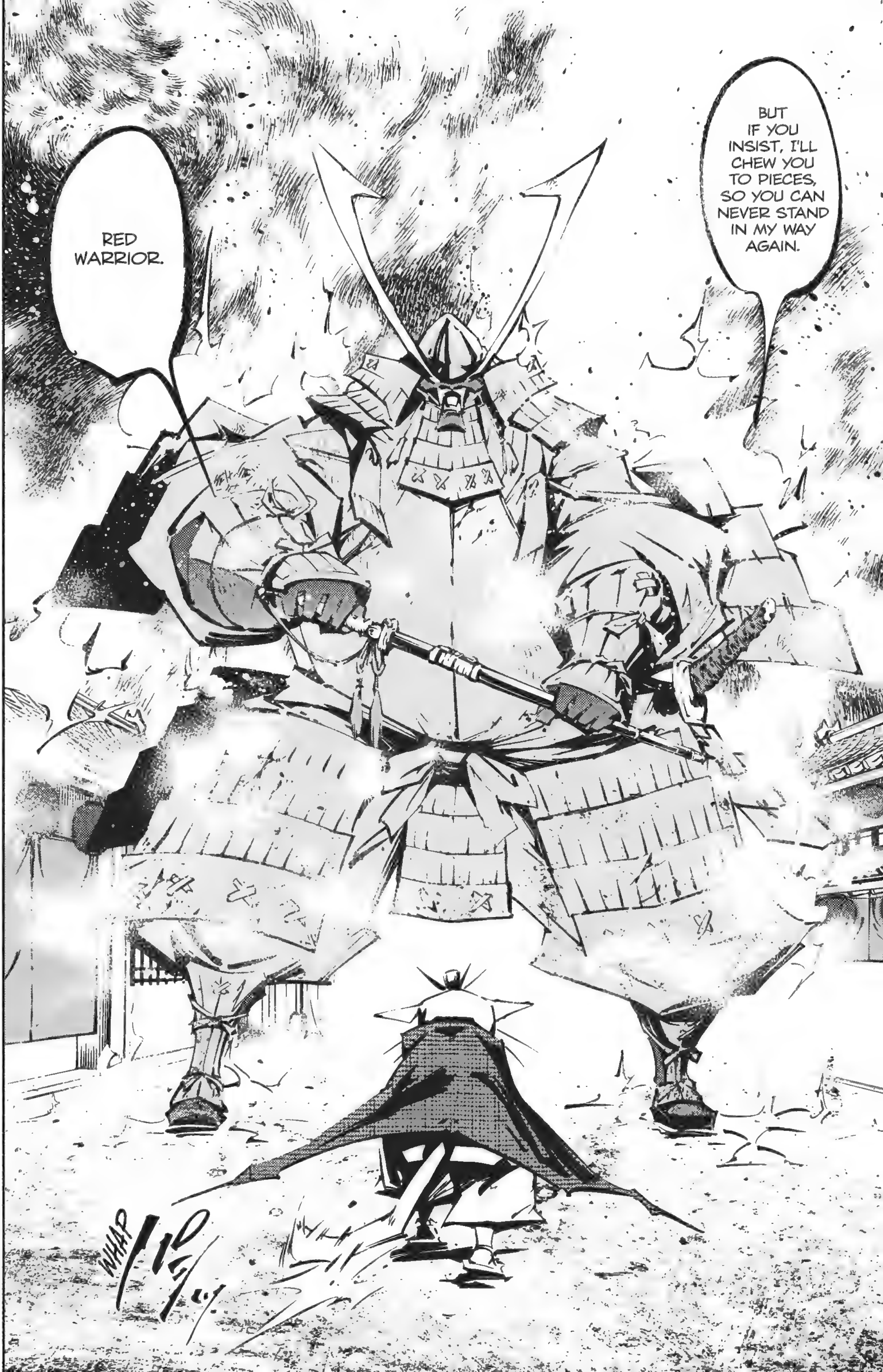

AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO MY OLD MAN'S IRON PAW!
BAM
WHETHER HE MEANT TO OR NOT, HE'S TAKEN ALL THEIR MOTIVATION AND MADE THEM HIS SLAVES!
...DOG-GONE IT!
NO CAT IN THIS WHOLE TOWN CAN KNOCK ME.

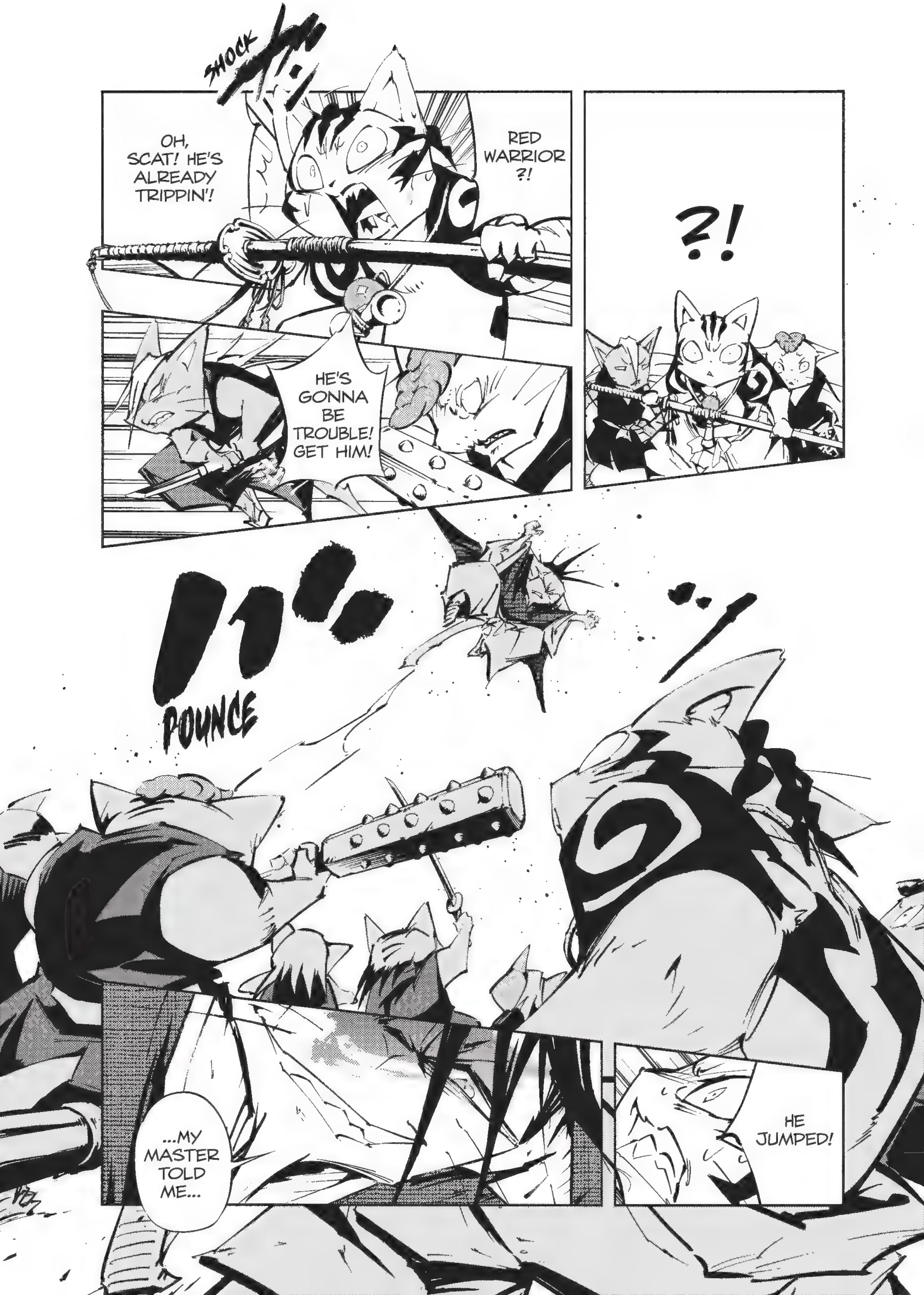

CATNIP
SO I'M GONNA SURPASS MY OLD MAN AND RULE AS CATNIP KING!
PA-POW!
YO! BOSS!
HEH.
MUR-MUR
MUR-MUR
DANGEROUS PASTIME, EH? ALL THE MORE REASON TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU MISERABLE MOGGIES.
THACK

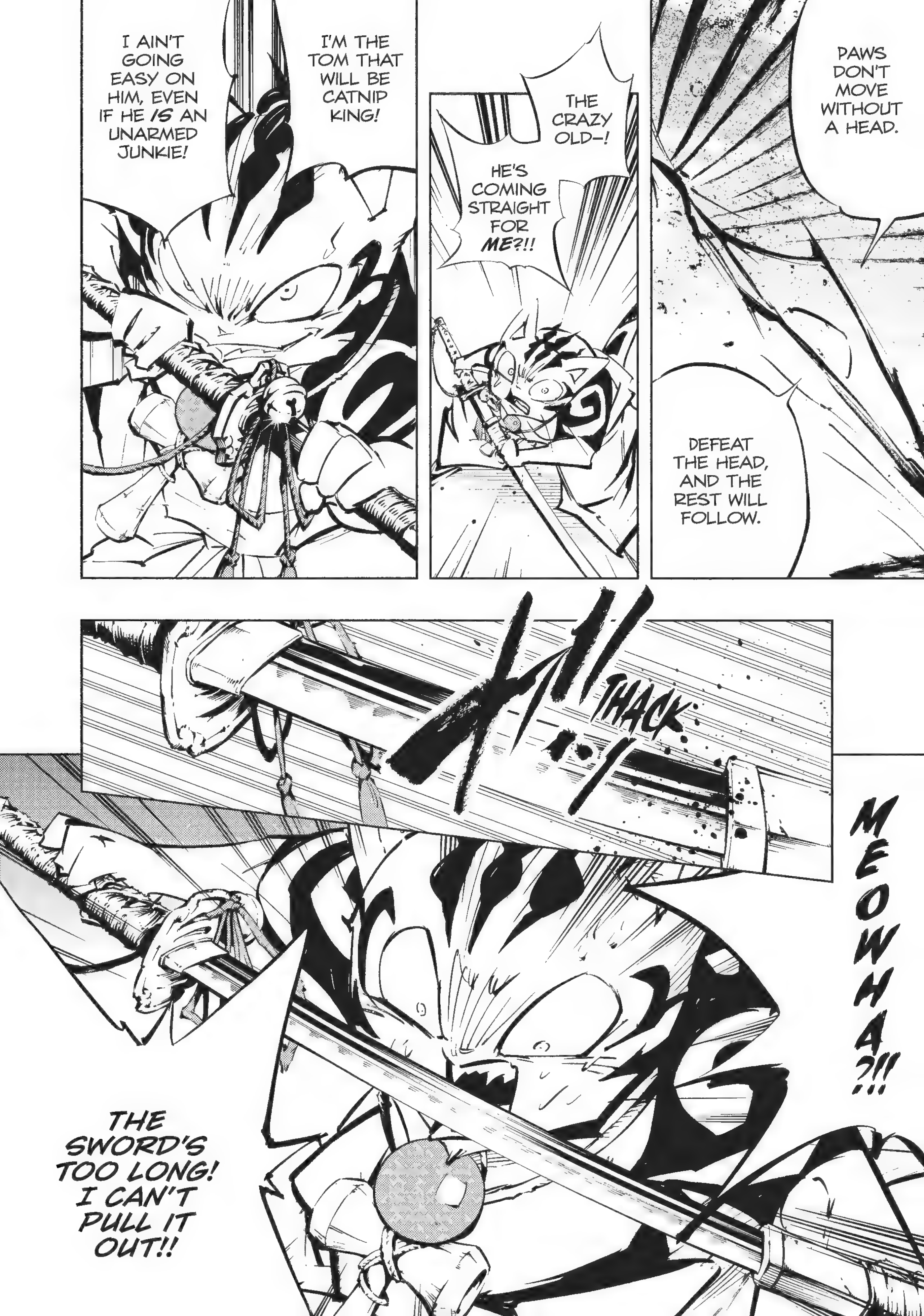

UH!
SNA
TCH
THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR.
CHOMP
AND JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM A FAT CAT'S GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SON. THIS IS QUALITY STUFF.

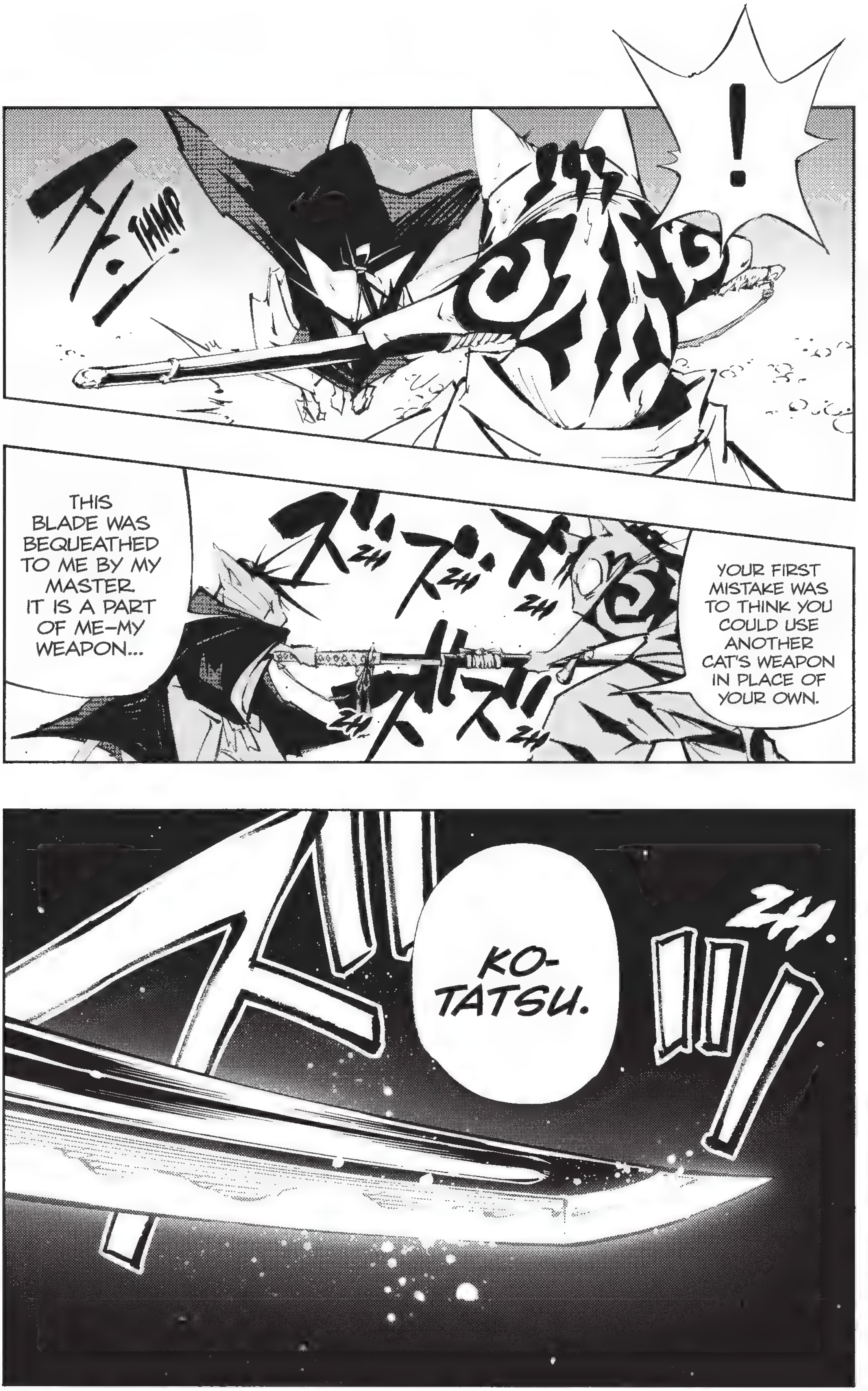

SHOCK
YOU'RE A USER?!
...AHH.
I'M JUST NOT MYSELF WITHOUT IT. NOT SINCE THAT DAY.
CHOMP
CHOMP
NOT SINCE *WHAT* DAY?! YOU'RE PRETTY MESSED UP FOR A GROWN CAT!
WE'RE GONNA MURDERIZE YA, JUNKIE!
WAIT UP, CATS.

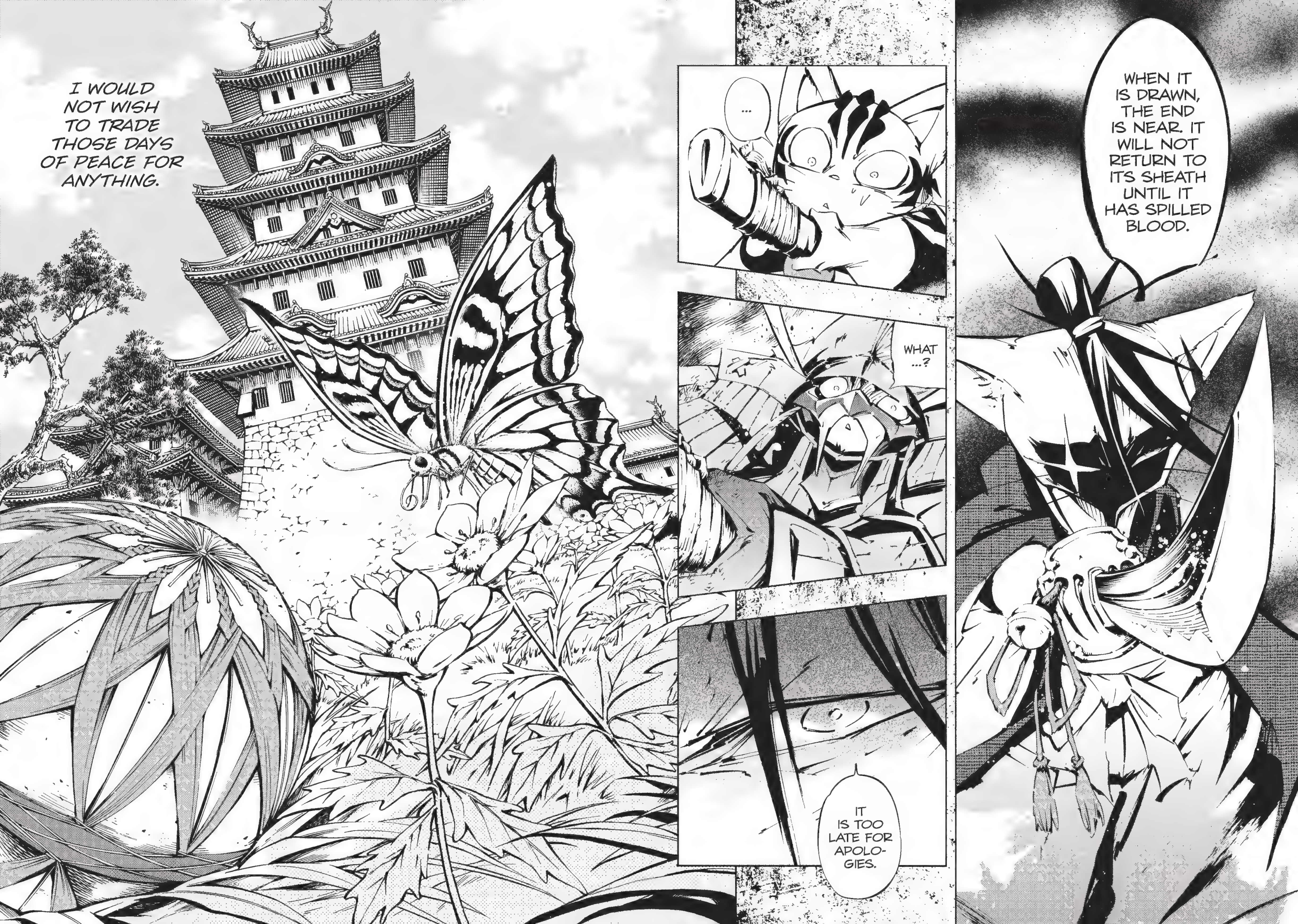

ALING
THE MESSED UP OLD TOM IS MINE.
KA-CHAK
I'LL KILL HIM WITH HIS OWN SWORD!
I WOULDN'T.
I'M SEEING MORE CLEARLY NOW. I FEEL MUCH BETTER—THANKS TO YOU.
SHA-KING

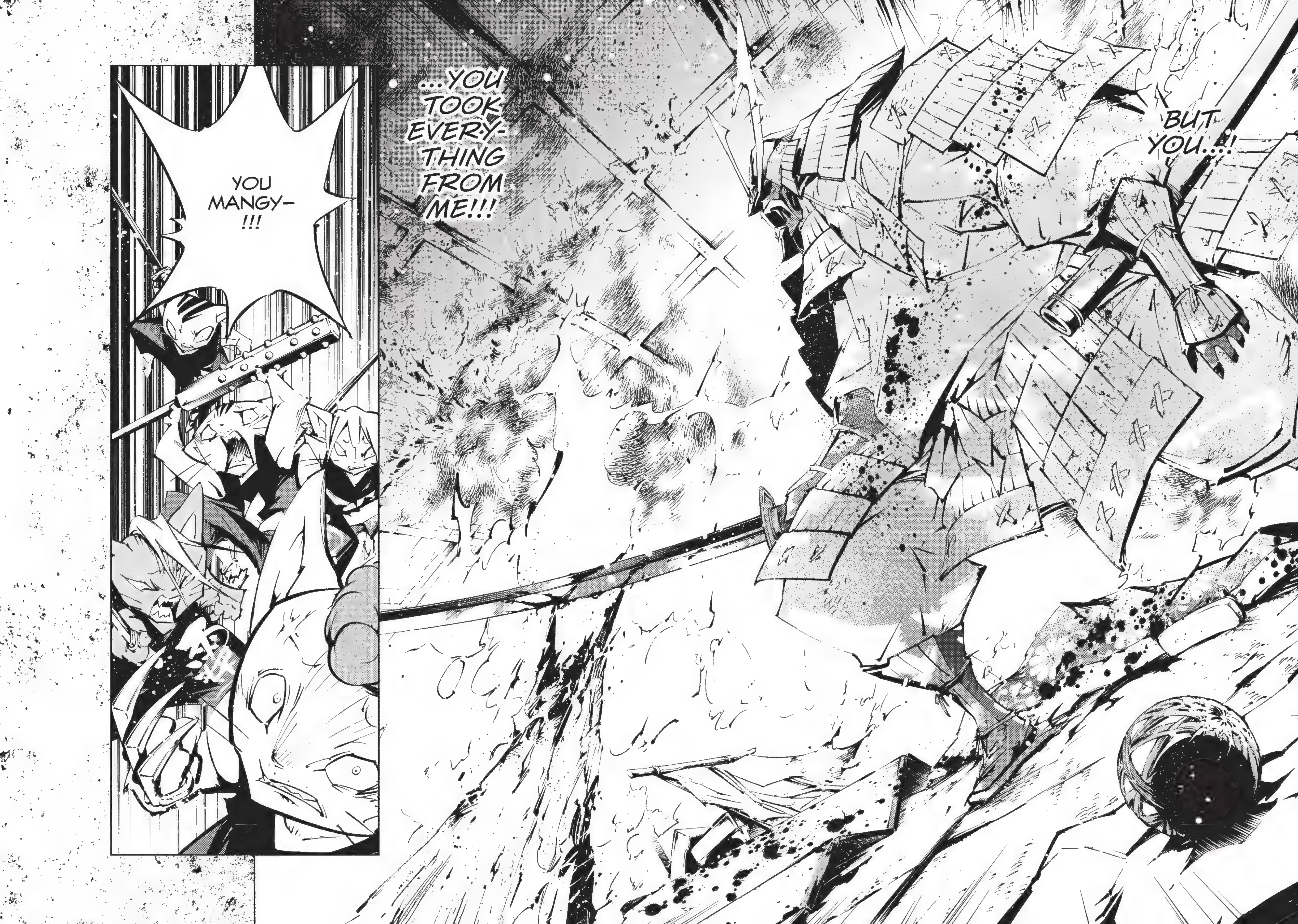

BUT IF YOU INSIST, I'LL CHEW YOU TO PIECES, SO YOU CAN NEVER STAND IN MY WAY AGAIN.
RED WARRIOR.
WHAP


SHOCK
RED WARRIOR ?!
OH, SCAT! HE'S ALREADY TRIPPIN'!
?!
HE'S GONNA BE TROUBLE! GET HIM!
POUNCE
HE JUMPED!
...MY MASTER TOLD ME...


PAWS DON'T MOVE WITHOUT A HEAD.
DEFEAT THE HEAD, AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW.
THE CRAZY OLD-!
HE'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR *ME*?!!
I'M THE TOM THAT WILL BE CATNIP KING!
I AIN'T GOING EASY ON HIM, EVEN IF HE *IS* AN UNARMED JUNKIE!
THACK
MEOWHA?!!
THE SWORD'S TOO LONG! I CAN'T PULL IT OUT!!

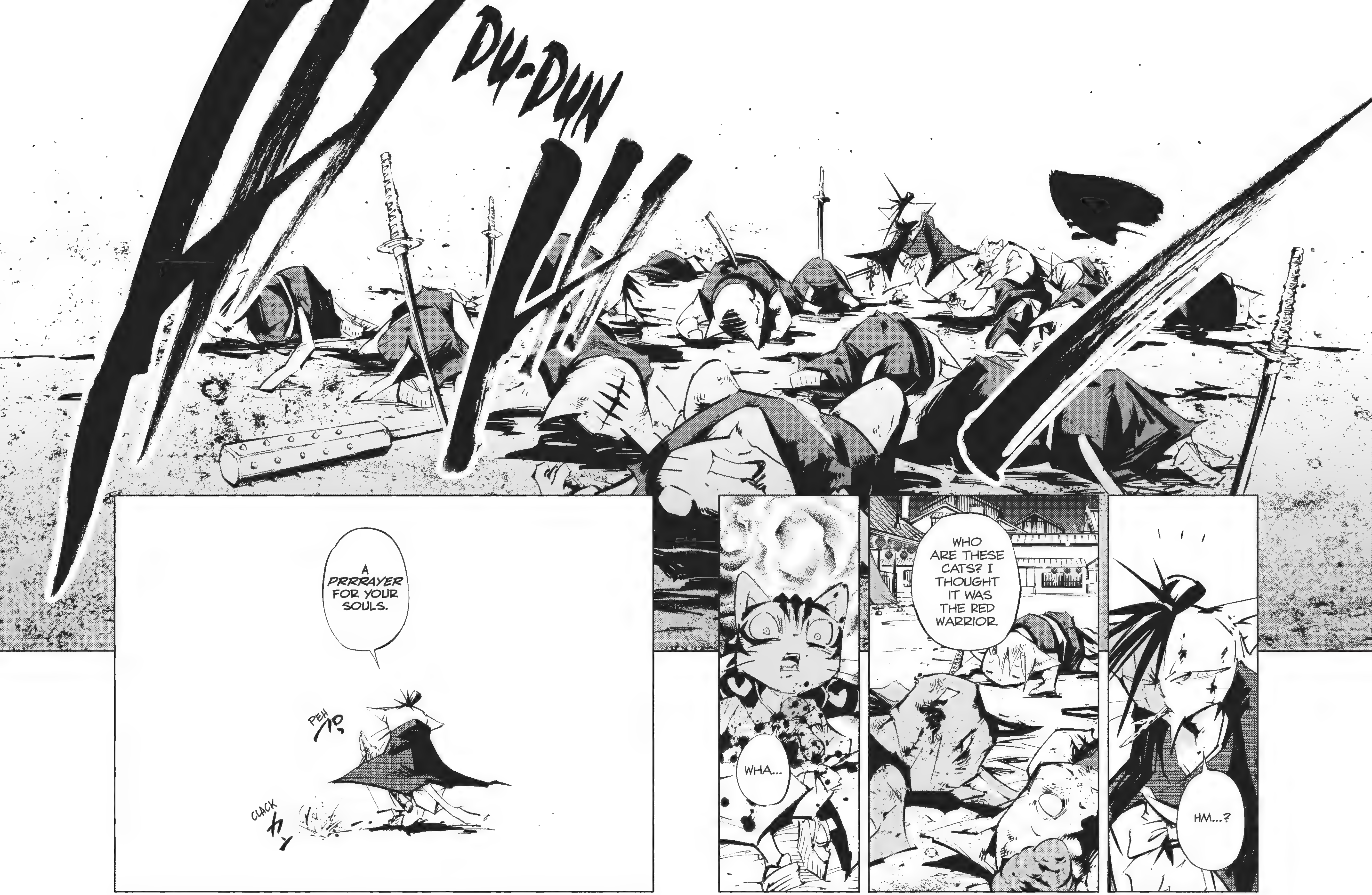

!
THMP
YOUR FIRST MISTAKE WAS TO THINK YOU COULD USE ANOTHER CAT'S WEAPON IN PLACE OF YOUR OWN.
THIS BLADE WAS BEQUEATHED TO ME BY MY MASTER. IT IS A PART OF ME—MY WEAPON...
ZH
ZH
ZH
ZH
ZH
ZH.
KO-TATSU.


WHEN IT IS DRAWN, THE END IS NEAR. IT WILL NOT RETURN TO ITS SHEATH UNTIL IT HAS SPILLED BLOOD.
...
WHAT ...?
IT IS TOO LATE FOR APOLOGIES.
I WOULD NOT WISH TO TRADE THOSE DAYS OF PEACE FOR ANYTHING.


BUT YOU...!!
...YOU TOOK EVERYTHING FROM ME!!!
YOU MANGY—!!!

AAAAAHHHHH
SLASH
SLASH
SLASH

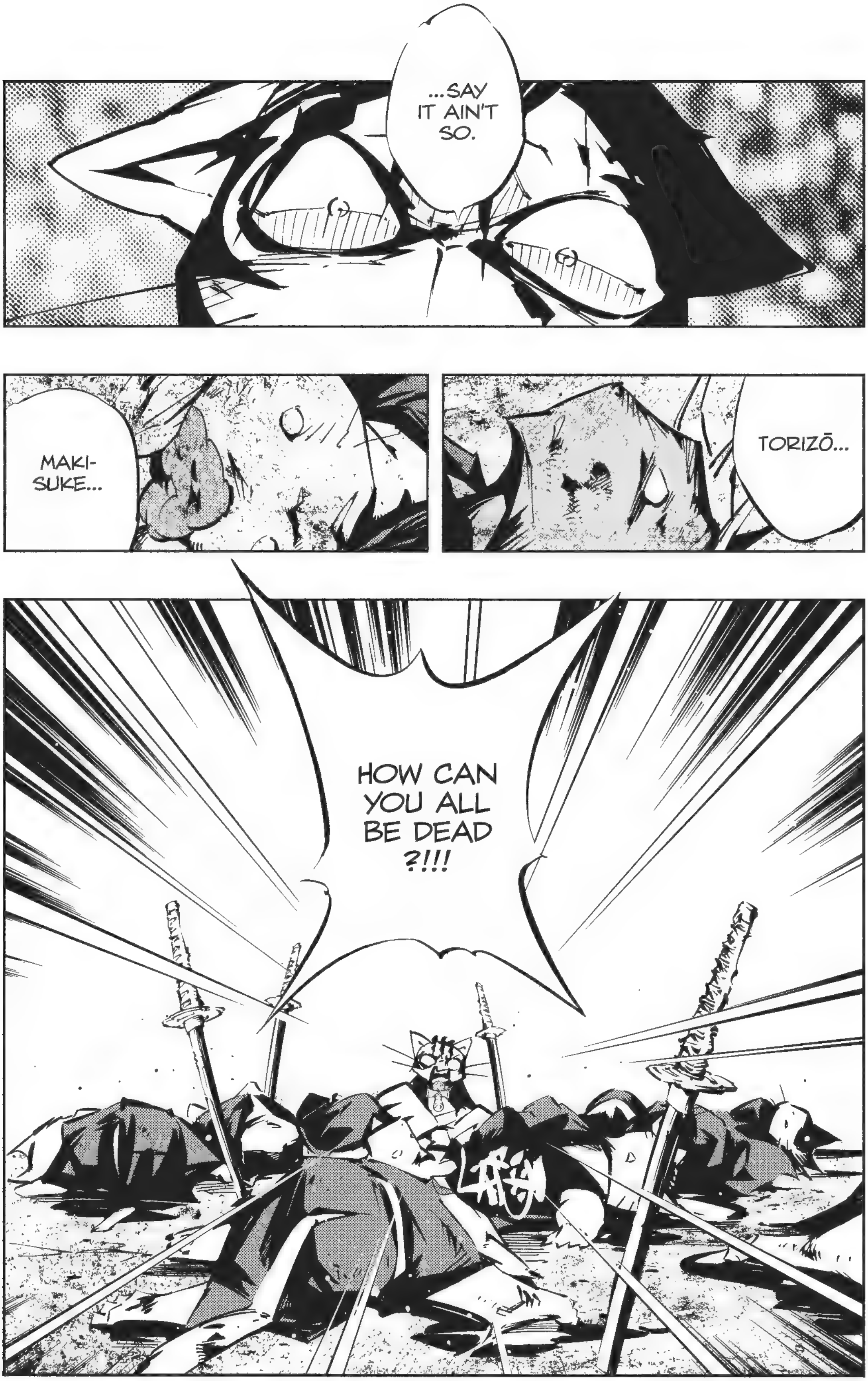
SLAAASH

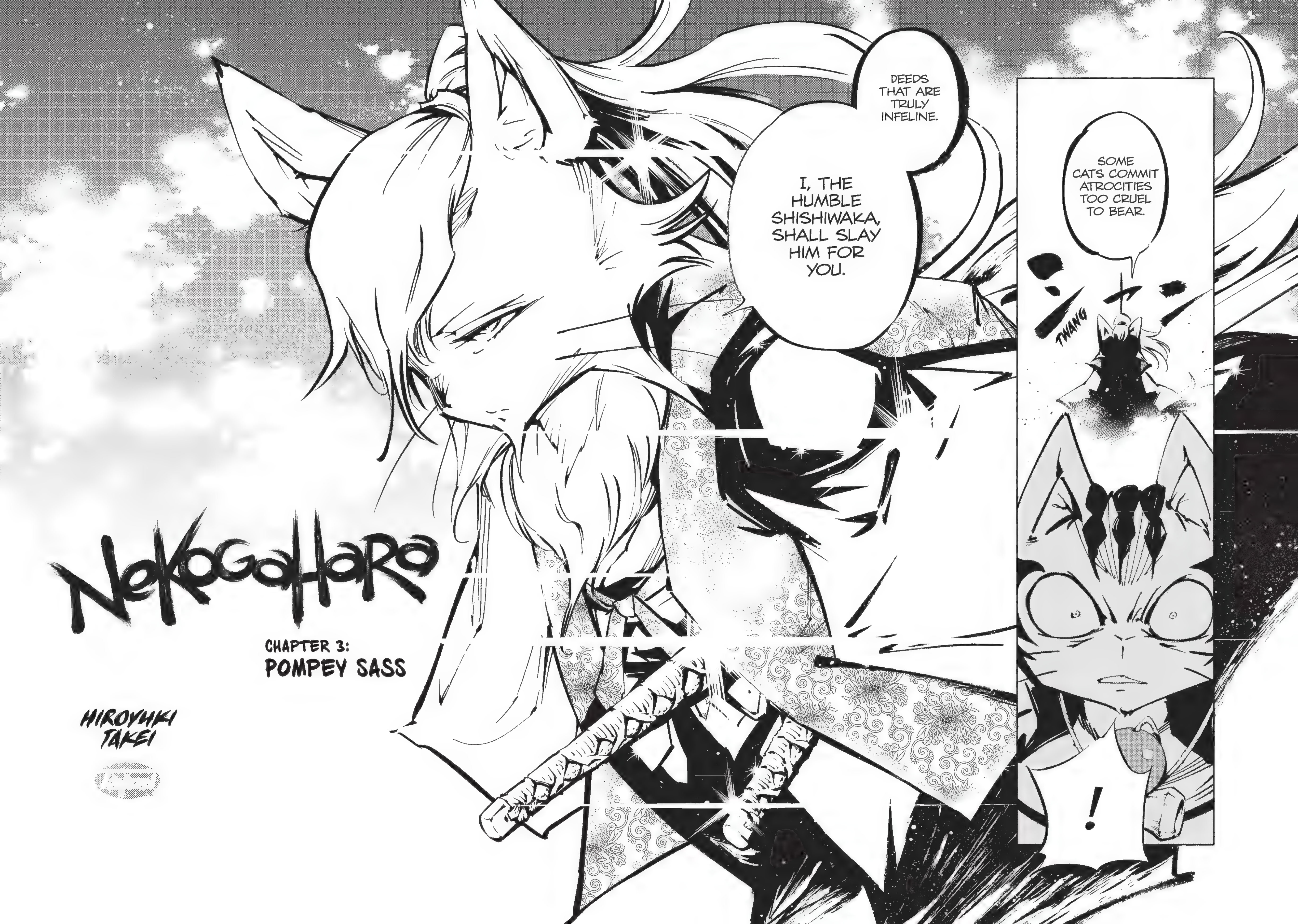

DU-DUN
HM...?
WHO ARE THESE CATS? I THOUGHT IT WAS THE RED WARRIOR
WHA...
A *PRRRAYER* FOR YOUR SOULS.
PEH
CLACK

猫ヶ原

NeKoGaHara

ネコガハラ

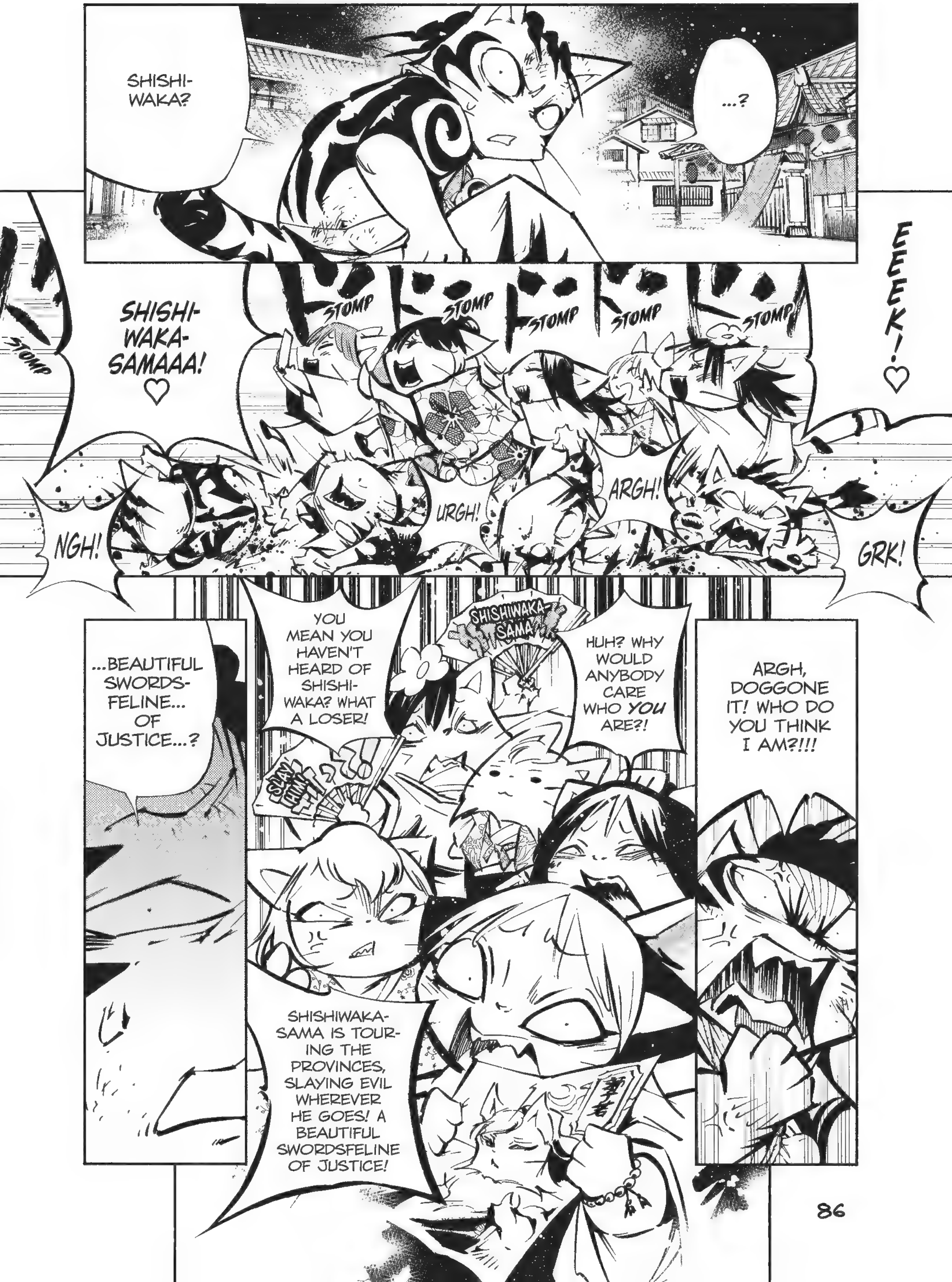

...SAY IT AIN'T SO.
TORIZŌ...
MAKISUKE...
HOW CAN YOU ALL BE DEAD?!!!

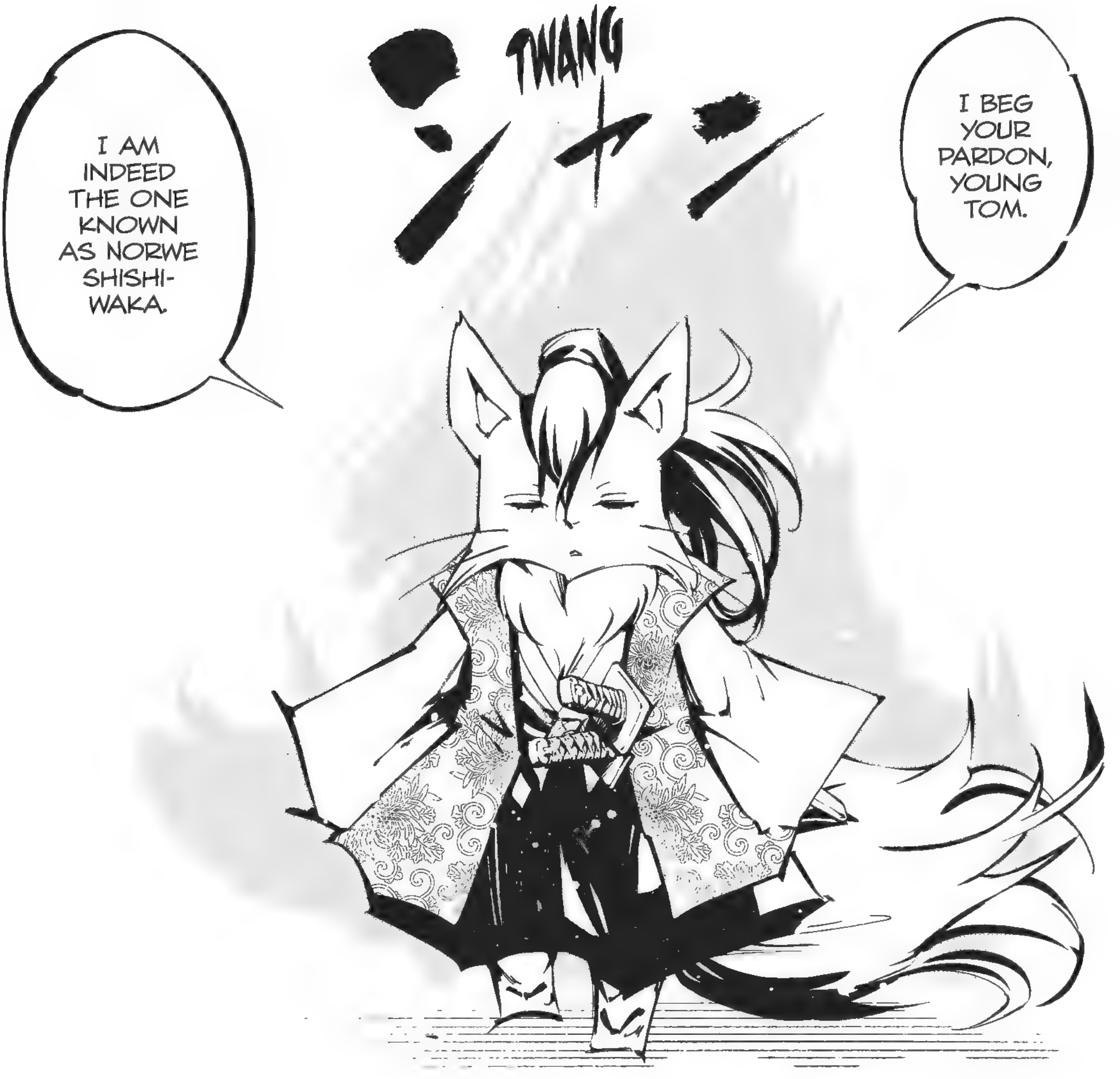

SOME CATS COMMIT ATROCITIES TOO CRUEL TO BEAR.
TWANG
!
DEEDS THAT ARE TRULY INFELINE.
I, THE HUMBLE SHISHIWAKA, SHALL SLAY HIM FOR YOU.

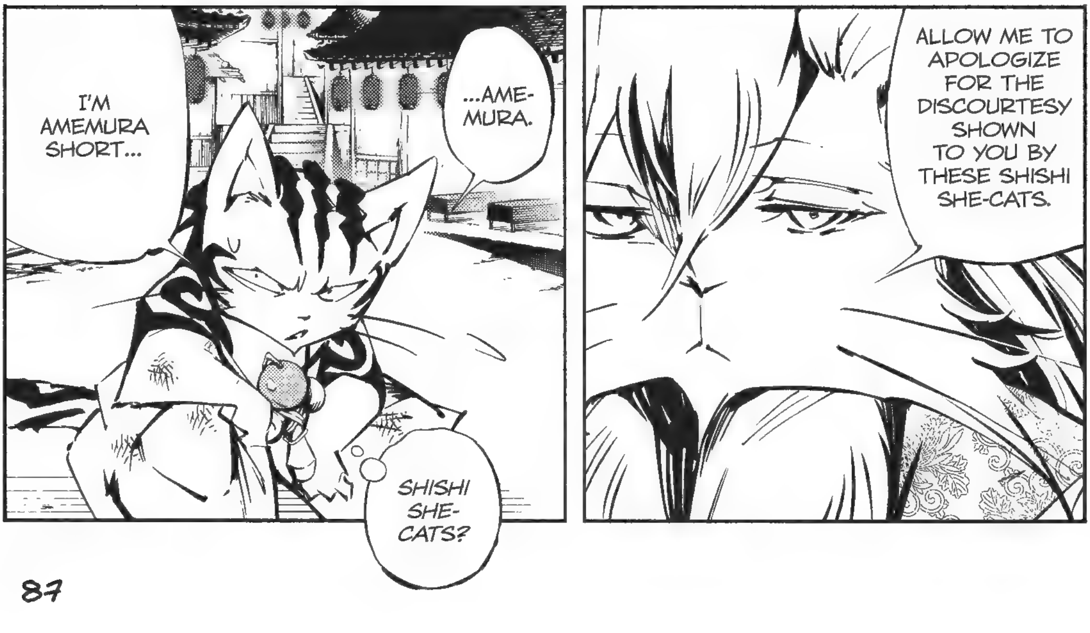
NEKOGAHARA

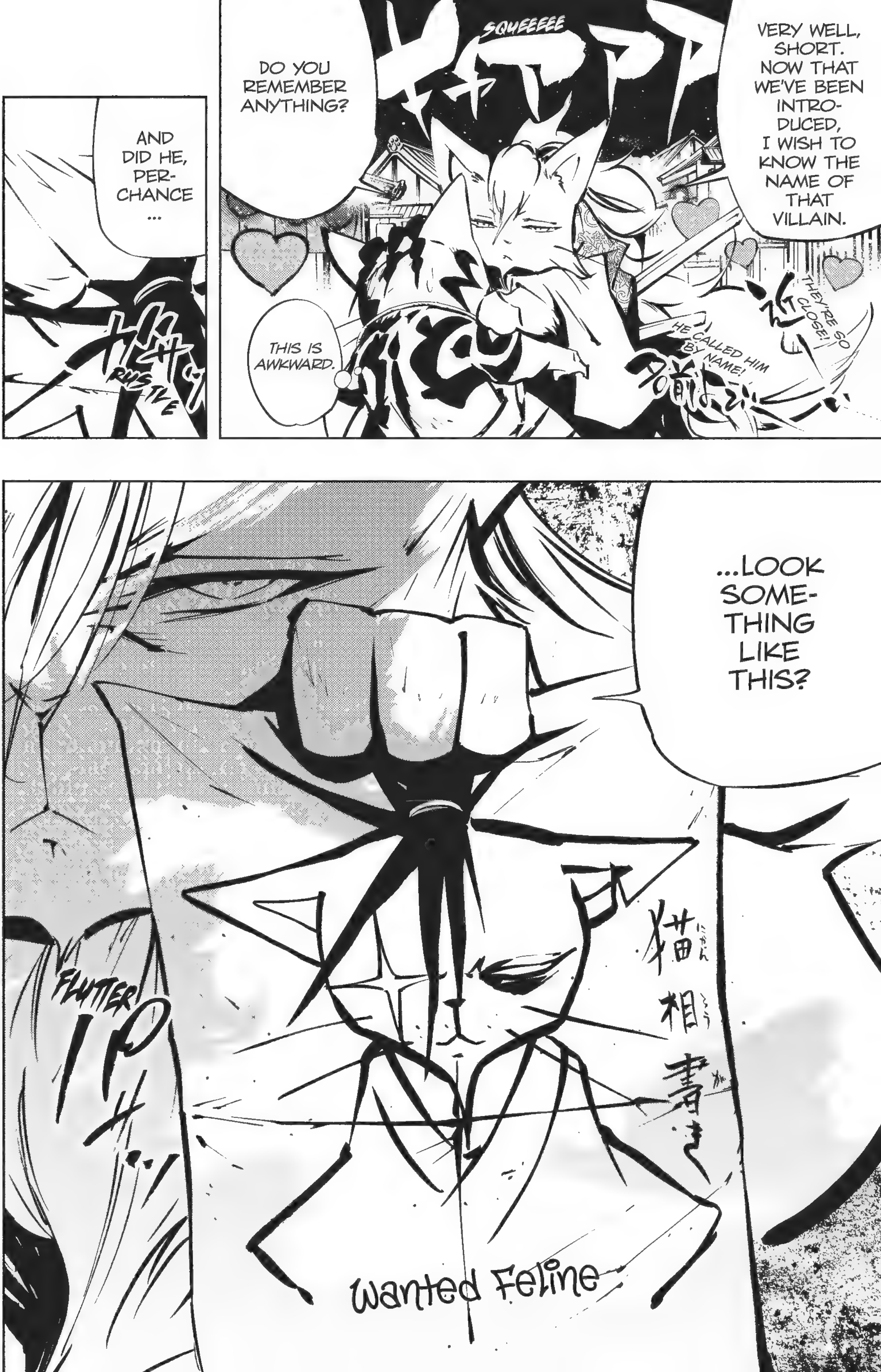
CHAPTER 3:
POMPEY SASS

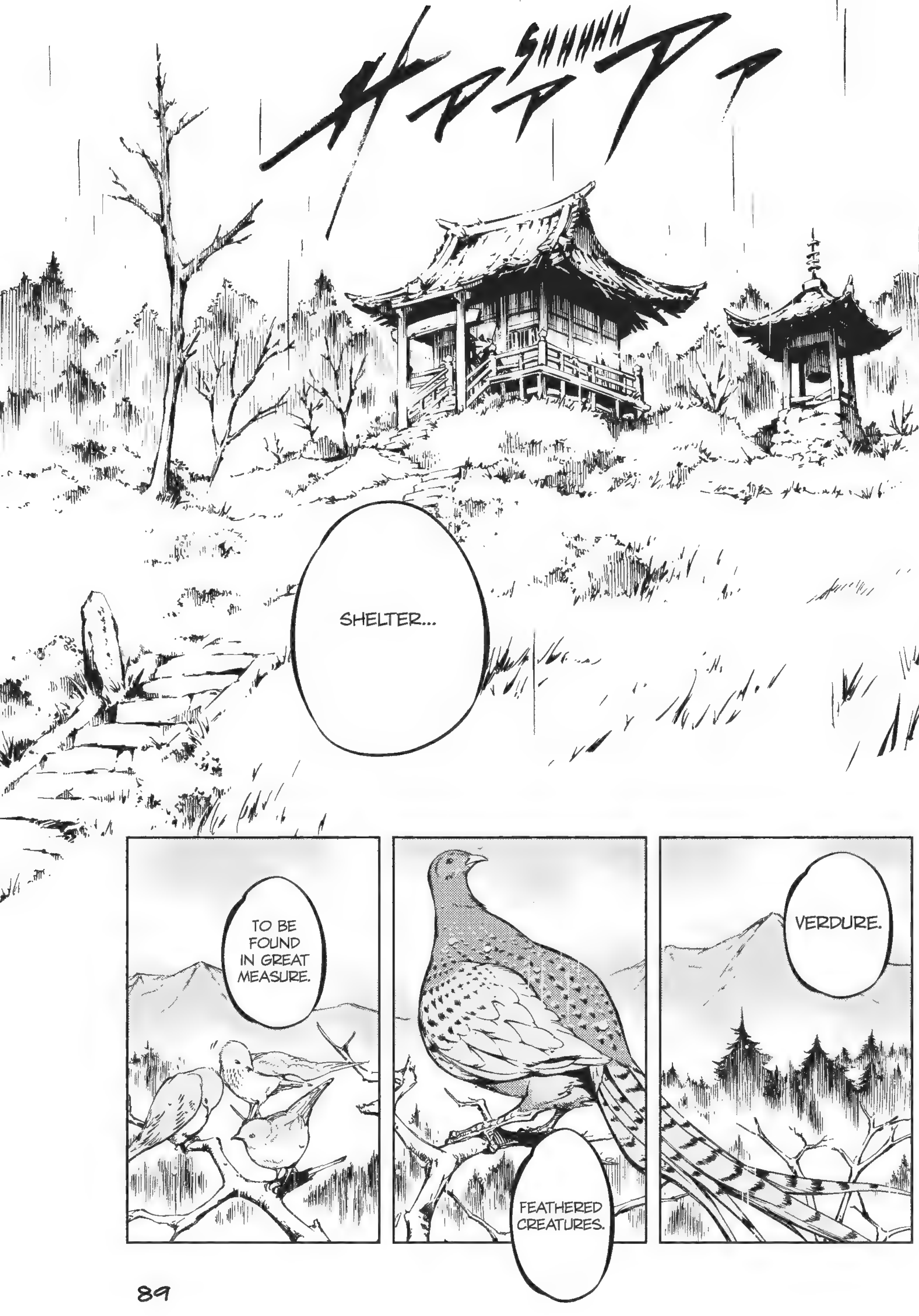
HIROYUKI TAKEI

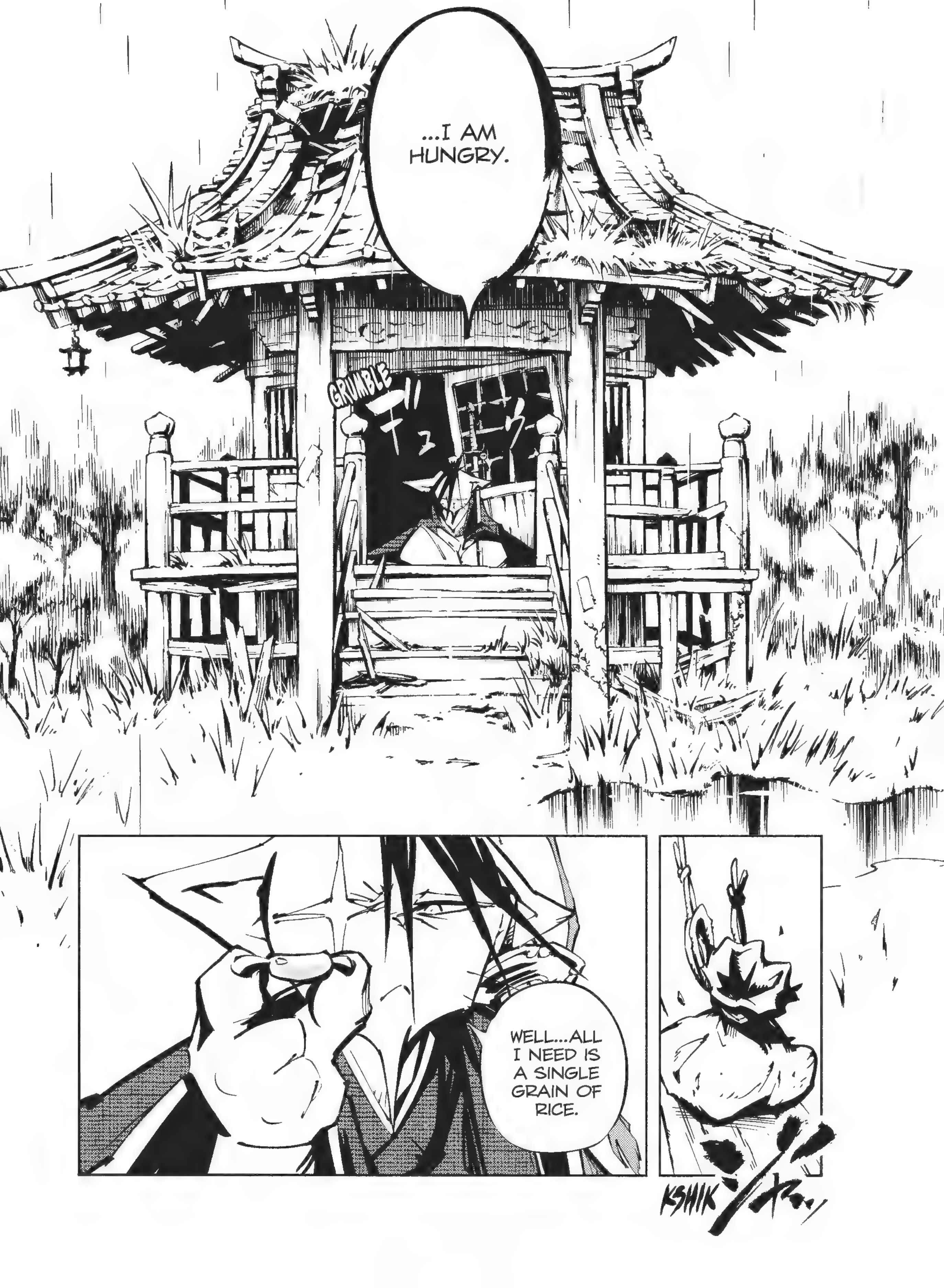

...?
SHISHIWAKA?
EEEEK! ♡
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
SHISHIWAKA-SAMAAA! ♡
STOMP
GRK!
ARGH!
URGH!
NGH!
ARGH, DOGGONE IT! WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?!!!
HUH? WHY WOULD ANYBODY CARE WHO *YOU* ARE?!
SHISHIWAKA-SAMA
YOU MEAN YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF SHISHIWAKA? WHAT A LOSER!
SLAY HIM!
SHISHIWAKA-SAMA IS TOURING THE PROVINCES, SLAYING EVIL WHEREVER HE GOES! A BEAUTIFUL SWORDSFELINE OF JUSTICE!
...BEAUTIFUL SWORDSFELINE... OF JUSTICE...?

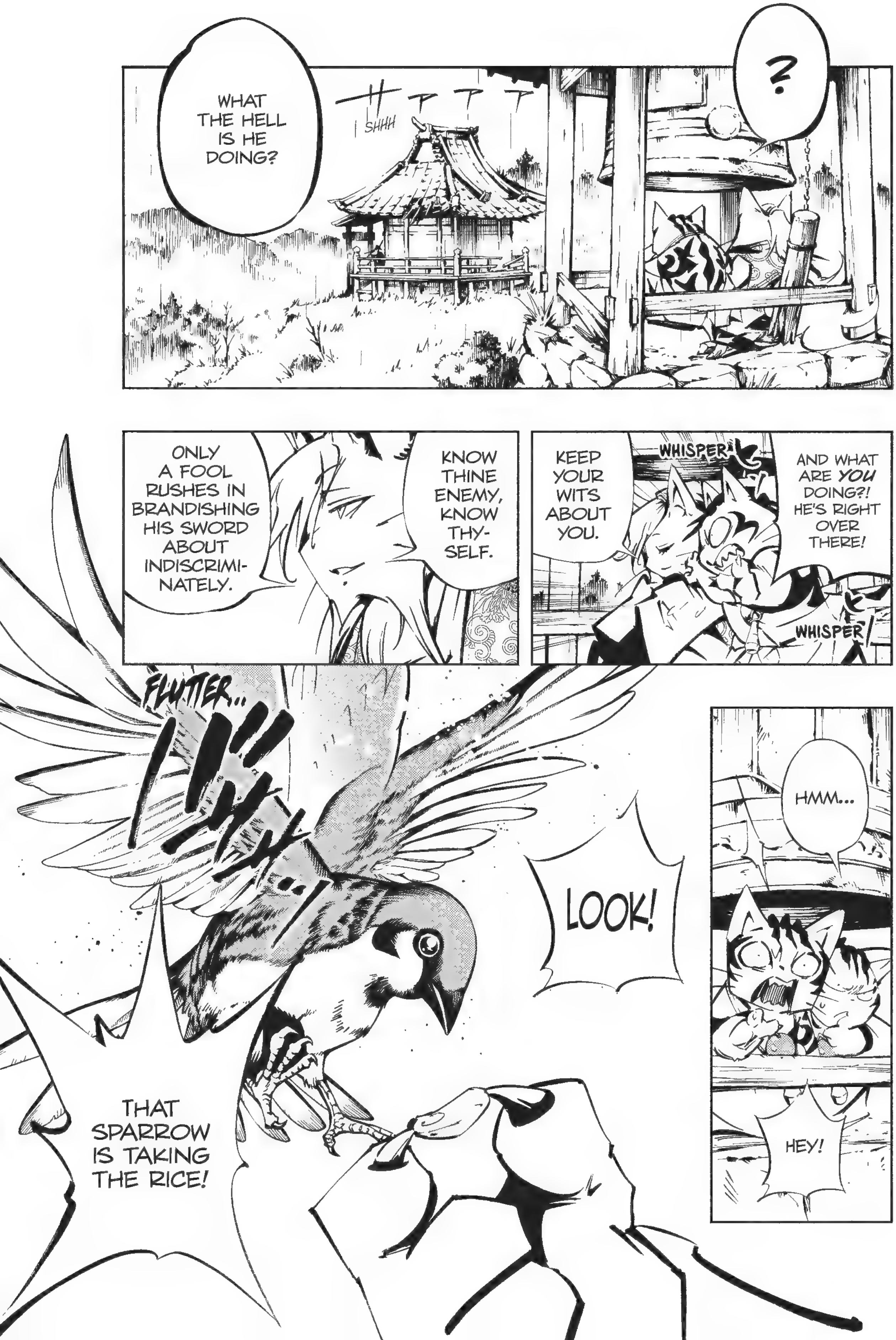

I BEG YOUR PARDON, YOUNG TOM.
TWANG
シャン
I AM INDEED THE ONE KNOWN AS NORWE SHISHIWAKA.

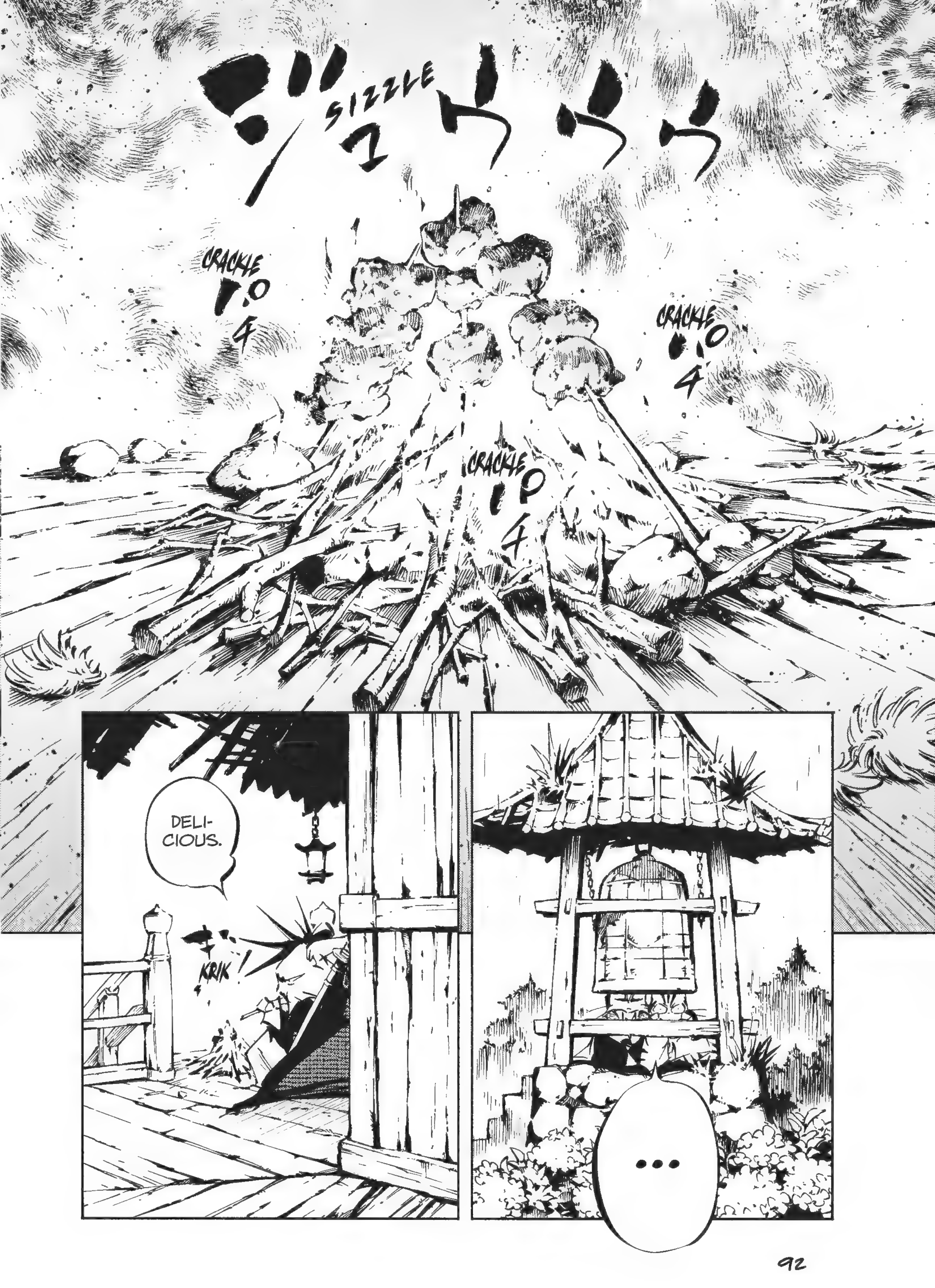

ALLOW ME TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE DISCOURTESY SHOWN TO YOU BY THESE SHISHI SHE-CATS.
...AMEMURA.
I'M AMEMURA SHORT...
SHISHI SHE-CATS?

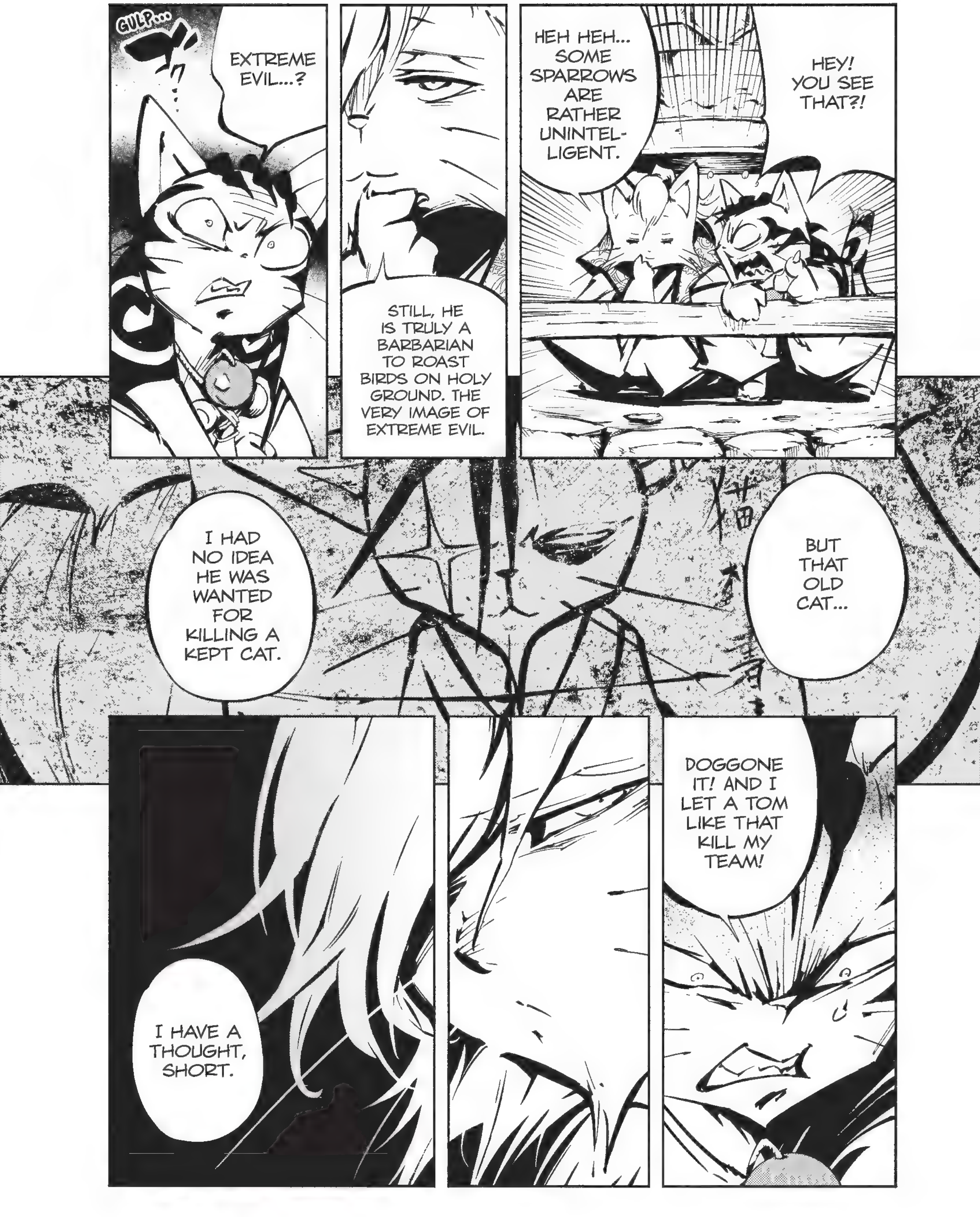

VERY WELL, SHORT. NOW THAT WE'VE BEEN INTRODUCED, I WISH TO KNOW THE NAME OF THAT VILLAIN.
SQUEEEEE
DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?
THEY'RE SO CLOSE!
HE CALLED HIM BY NAME!
THIS IS AWKWARD.
AND DID HE, PERCHANCE ...
RUSTLE
...LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS?
猫相書き
Wanted Feline
FLUTTER

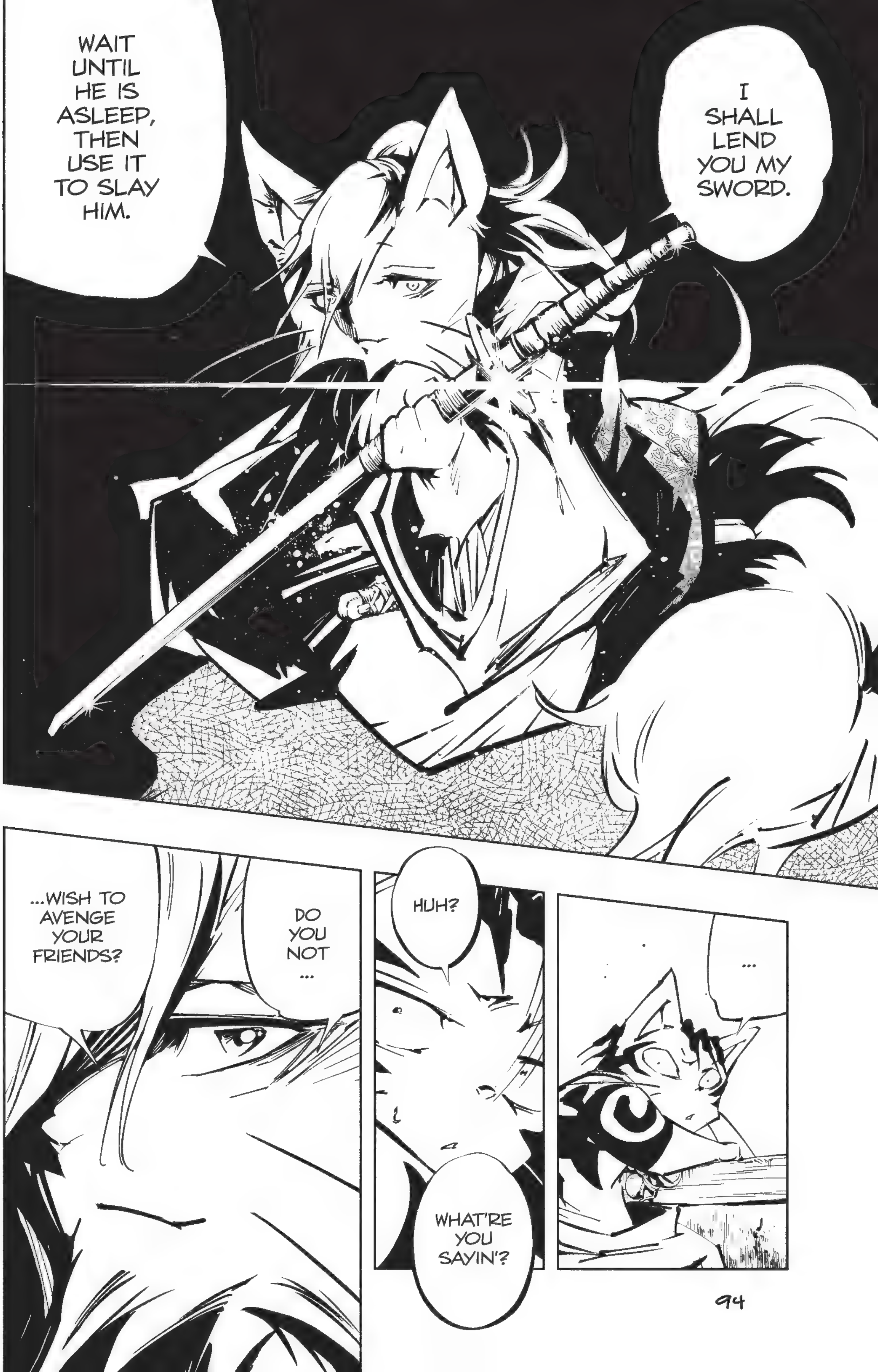

サァァァァ
SHHHHH
SHELTER...
VERDURE.
FEATHERED CREATURES.
TO BE FOUND IN GREAT MEASURE.

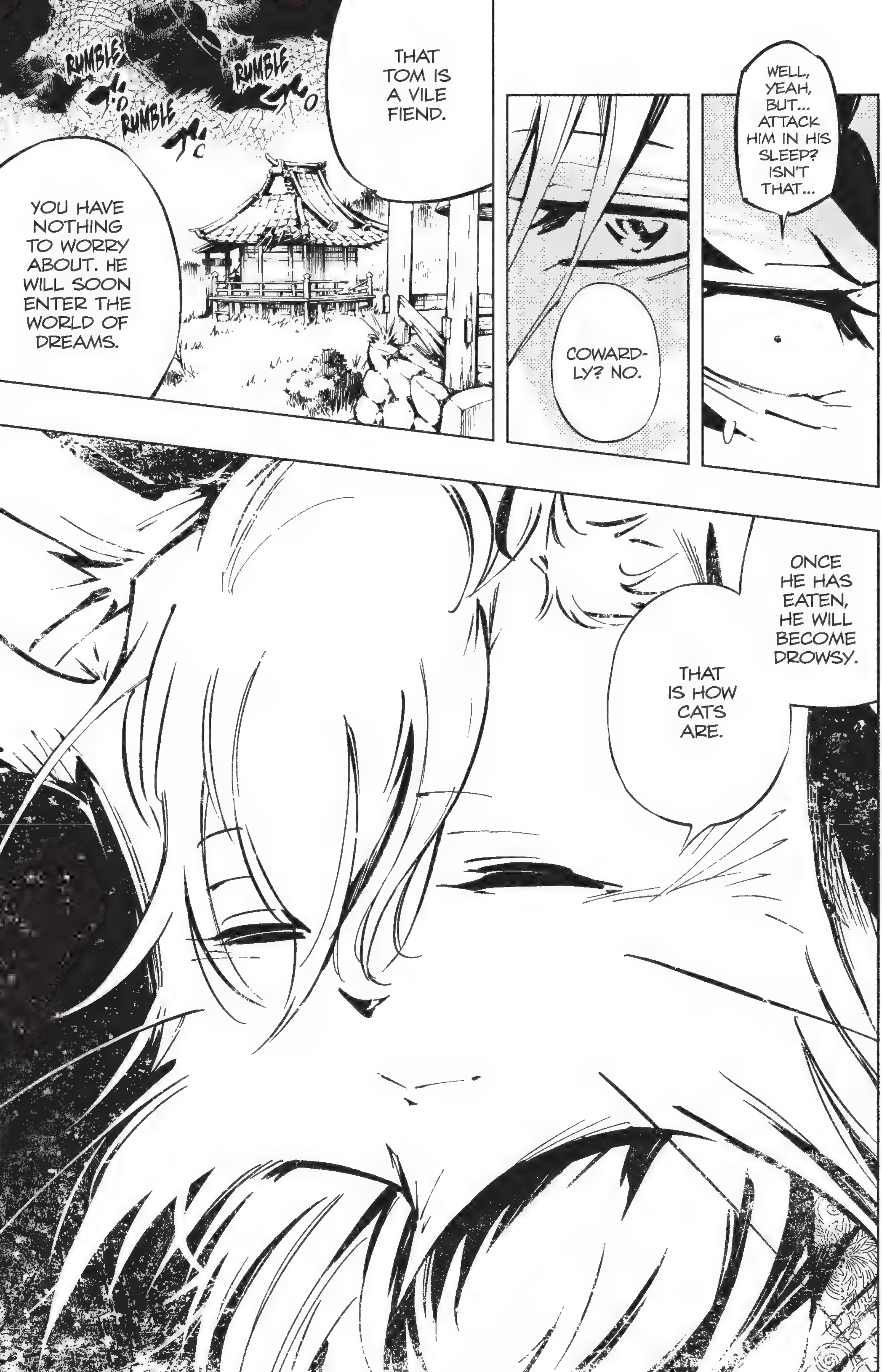

...I AM HUNGRY.
GRUMBLE
KSHIK
WELL...ALL I NEED IS A SINGLE GRAIN OF RICE.

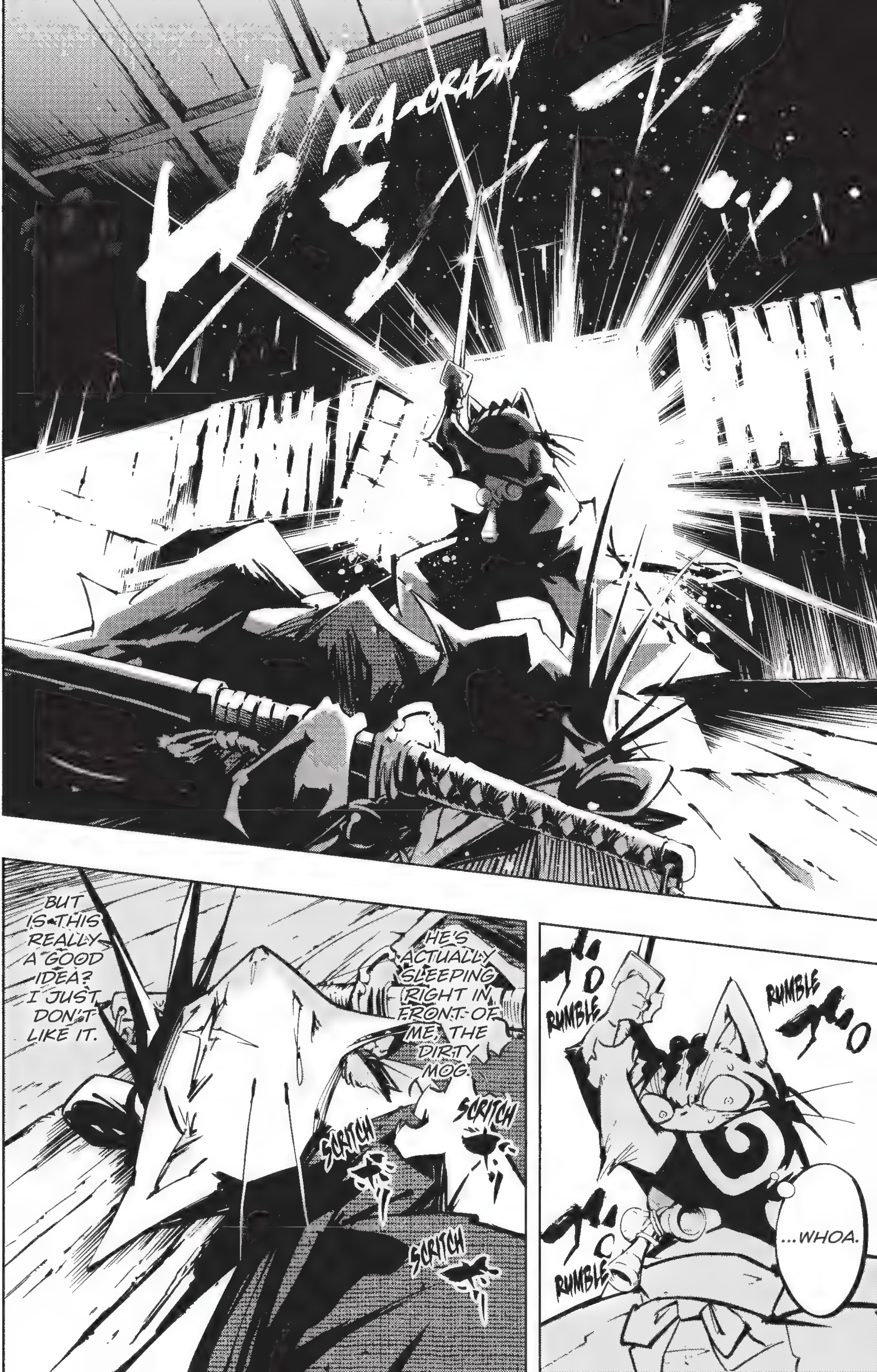

?
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?
SHHH
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! HE'S RIGHT OVER THERE!
WHISPER
WHISPER
KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU.
KNOW THINE ENEMY, KNOW THYSELF.
ONLY A FOOL RUSHES IN BRANDISHING HIS SWORD ABOUT INDISCRIMINATELY.
HMM...
HEY!
LOOK!
THAT SPARROW IS TAKING THE RICE!
FLUTTER...

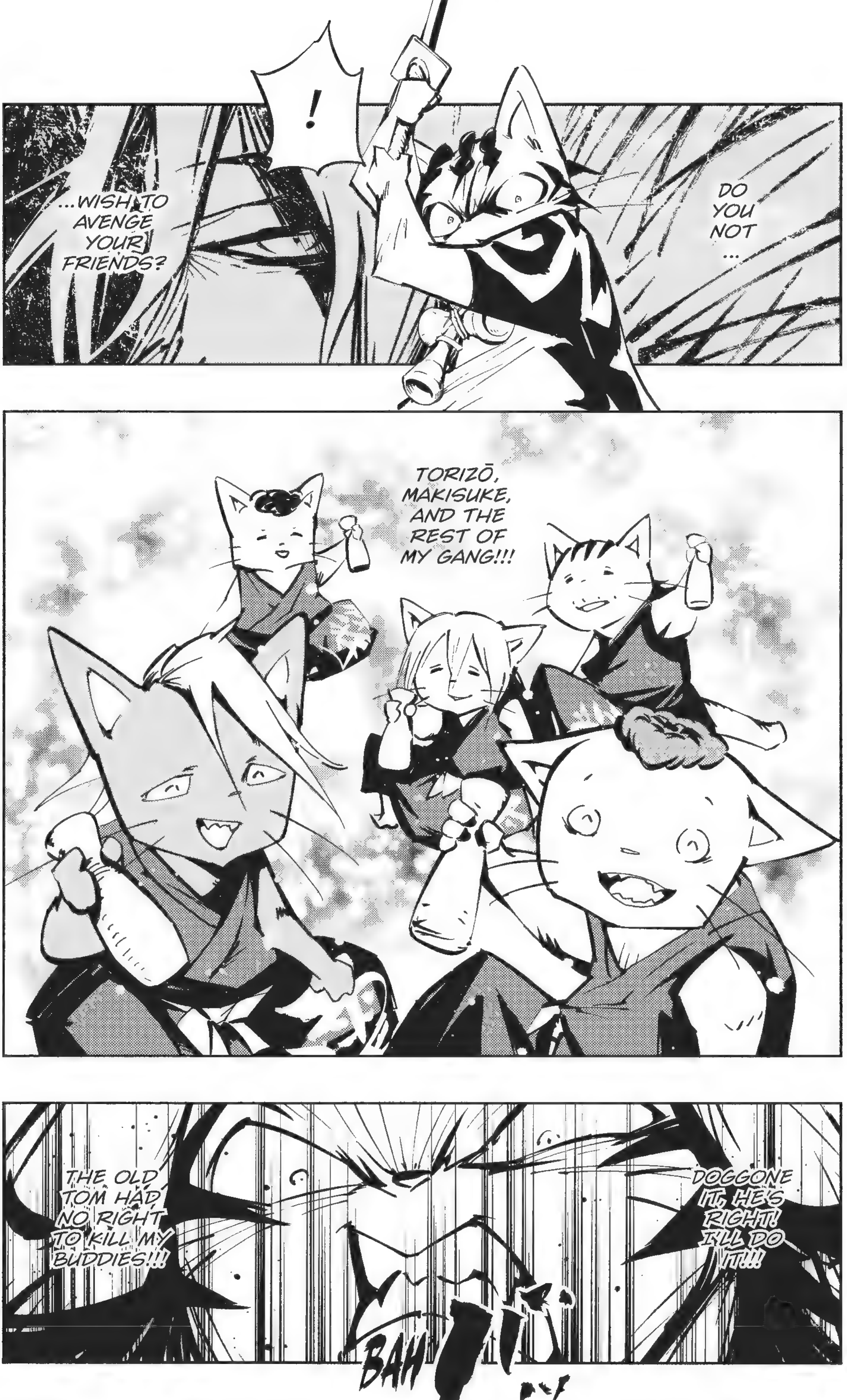

ジュゥゥゥ
SIZZLE
CRACKLE
パチ
CRACKLE
パチ
CRACKLE
パチ
...
DELI-CIOUS.
キ
KRIK!

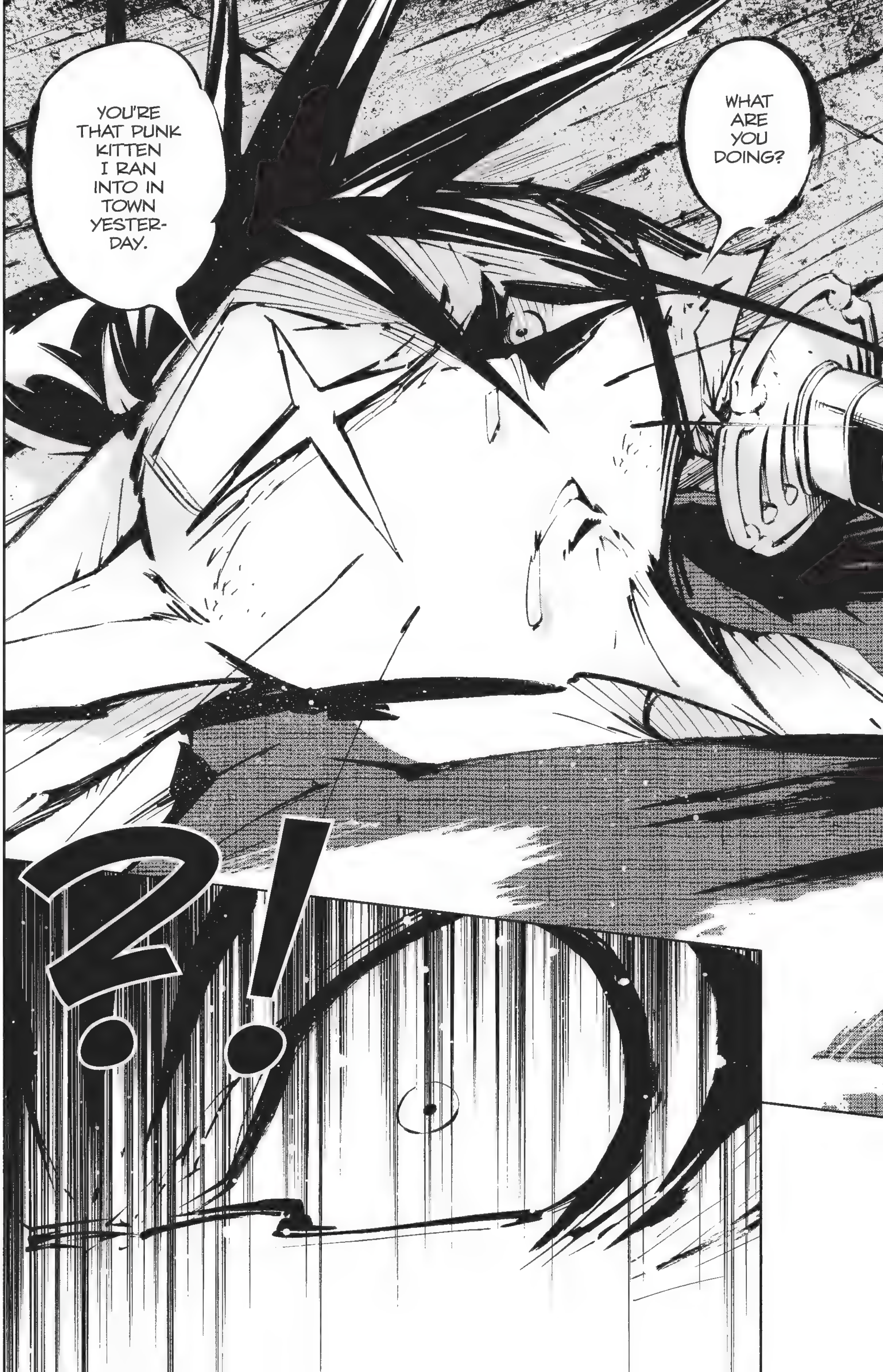

HEY! YOU SEE THAT?!
HEH HEH... SOME SPARROWS ARE RATHER UNINTELLIGENT.
STILL, HE IS TRULY A BARBARIAN TO ROAST BIRDS ON HOLY GROUND. THE VERY IMAGE OF EXTREME EVIL.
GULP...
EXTREME EVIL...?
BUT THAT OLD CAT...
I HAD NO IDEA HE WAS WANTED FOR KILLING A KEPT CAT.
DOGGONE IT! AND I LET A TOM LIKE THAT KILL MY TEAM!
I HAVE A THOUGHT, SHORT.

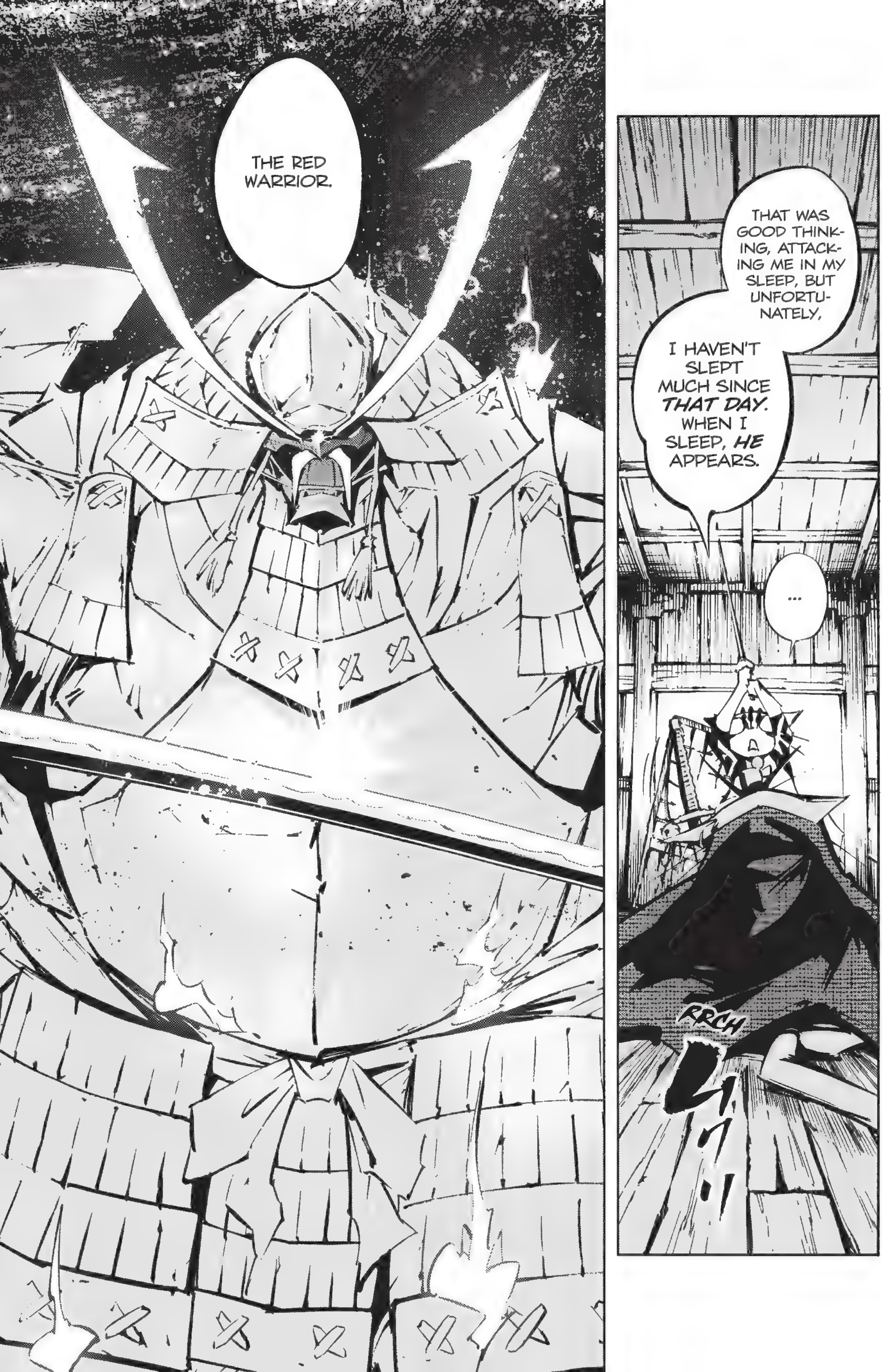

I SHALL LEND YOU MY SWORD.
WAIT UNTIL HE IS ASLEEP, THEN USE IT TO SLAY HIM.
...
HUH?
WHAT'RE YOU SAYIN'?
DO YOU NOT ...
...WISH TO AVENGE YOUR FRIENDS?

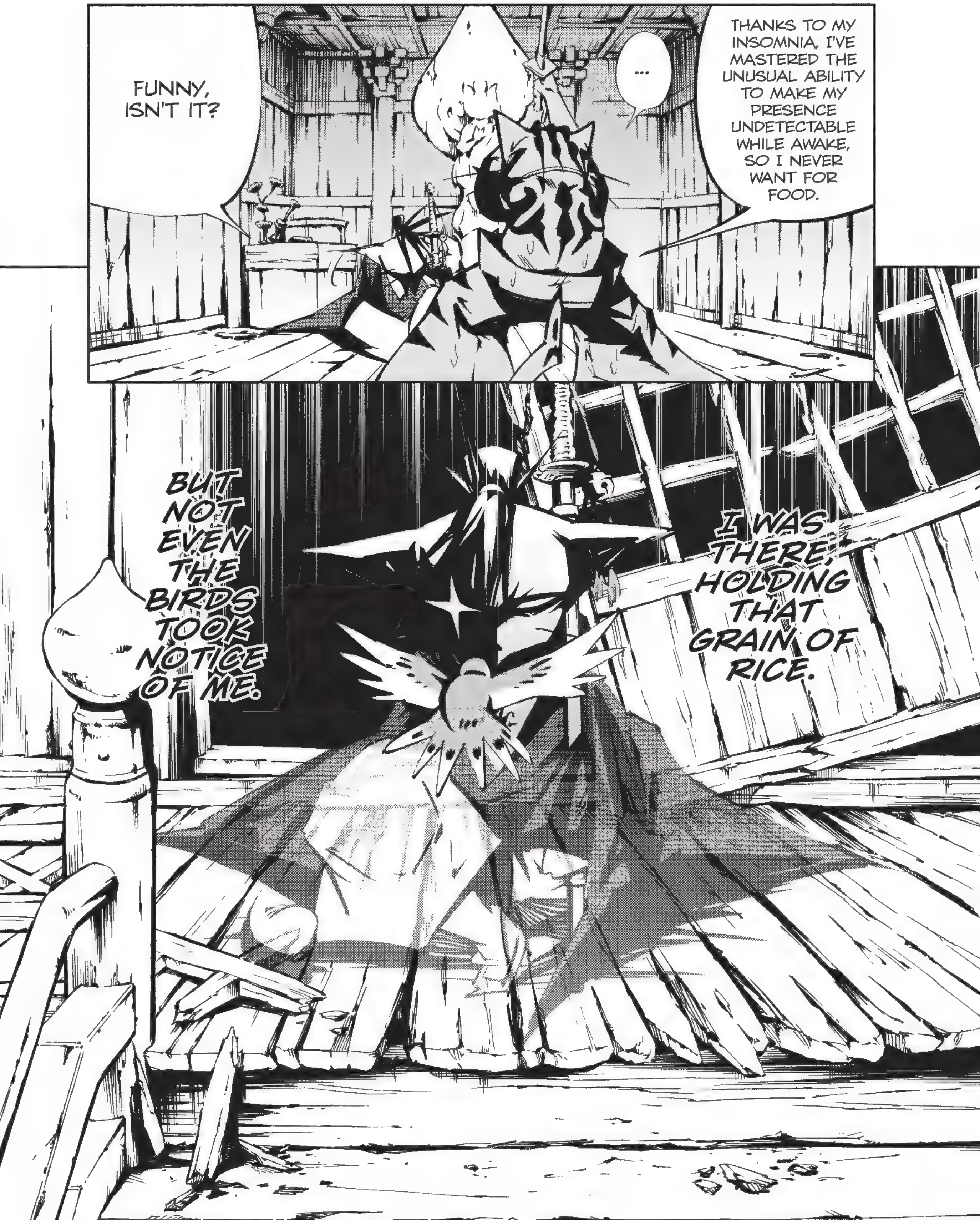

WELL, YEAH, BUT... ATTACK HIM IN HIS SLEEP? ISN'T THAT...
COWARDLY? NO.
THAT TOM IS A VILE FIEND.
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. HE WILL SOON ENTER THE WORLD OF DREAMS.
ONCE HE HAS EATEN, HE WILL BECOME DROWSY.
THAT IS HOW CATS ARE.

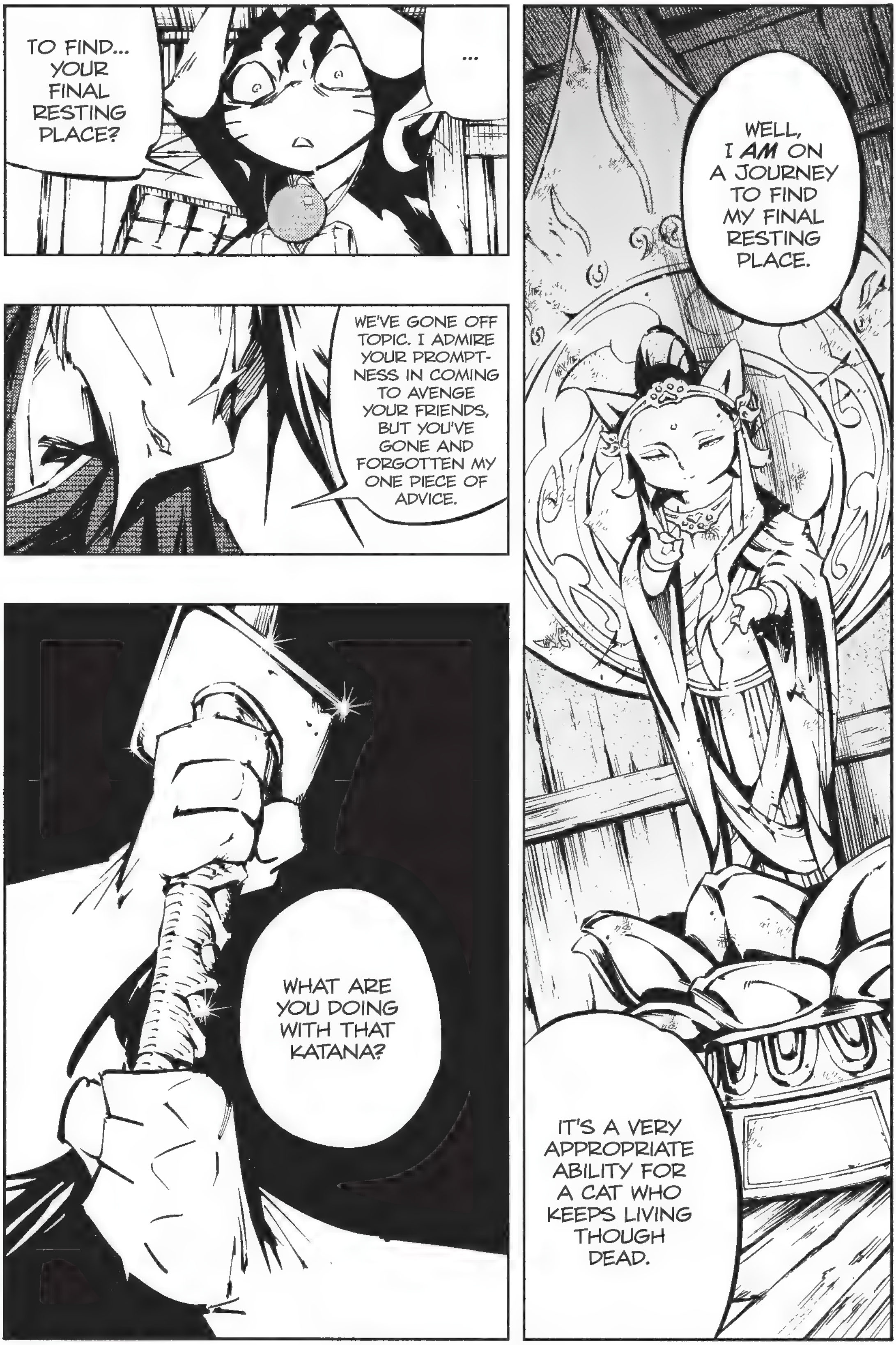

KA-CRASH
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
...WHOA.
HE'S ACTUALLY SLEEPING RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, THE DIRTY MOG.
BUT IS THIS REALLY A GOOD IDEA? I JUST DON'T LIKE IT.
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH

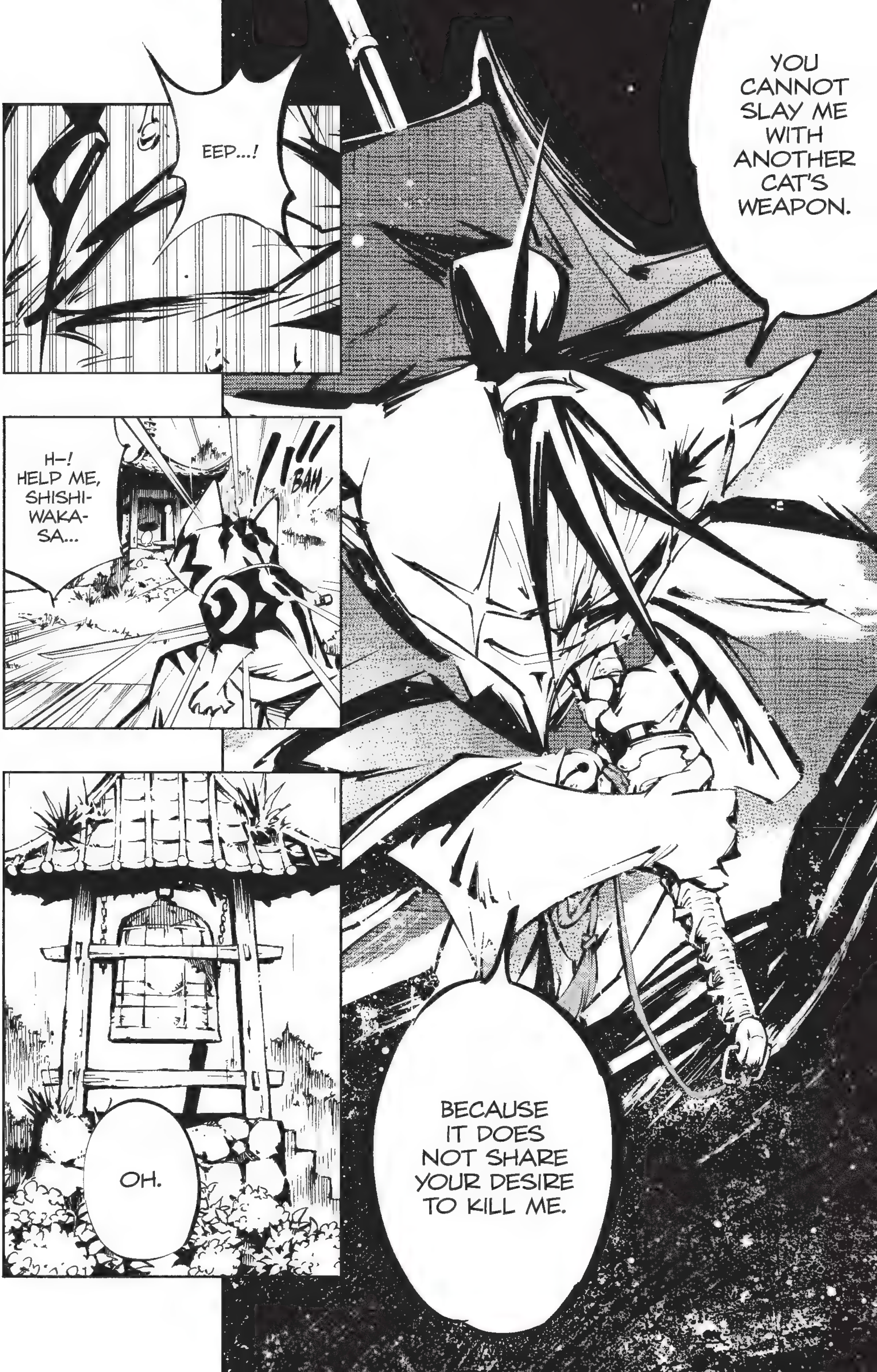

!
DO YOU NOT …
…WISH TO AVENGE YOUR FRIENDS?
TORIZŌ, MAKISUKE, AND THE REST OF MY GANG!!!
DOGGONE IT, HE'S RIGHT! I'LL DO IT!!!
THE OLD TOM HAD NO RIGHT TO KILL MY BUDDIES!!!
BAH

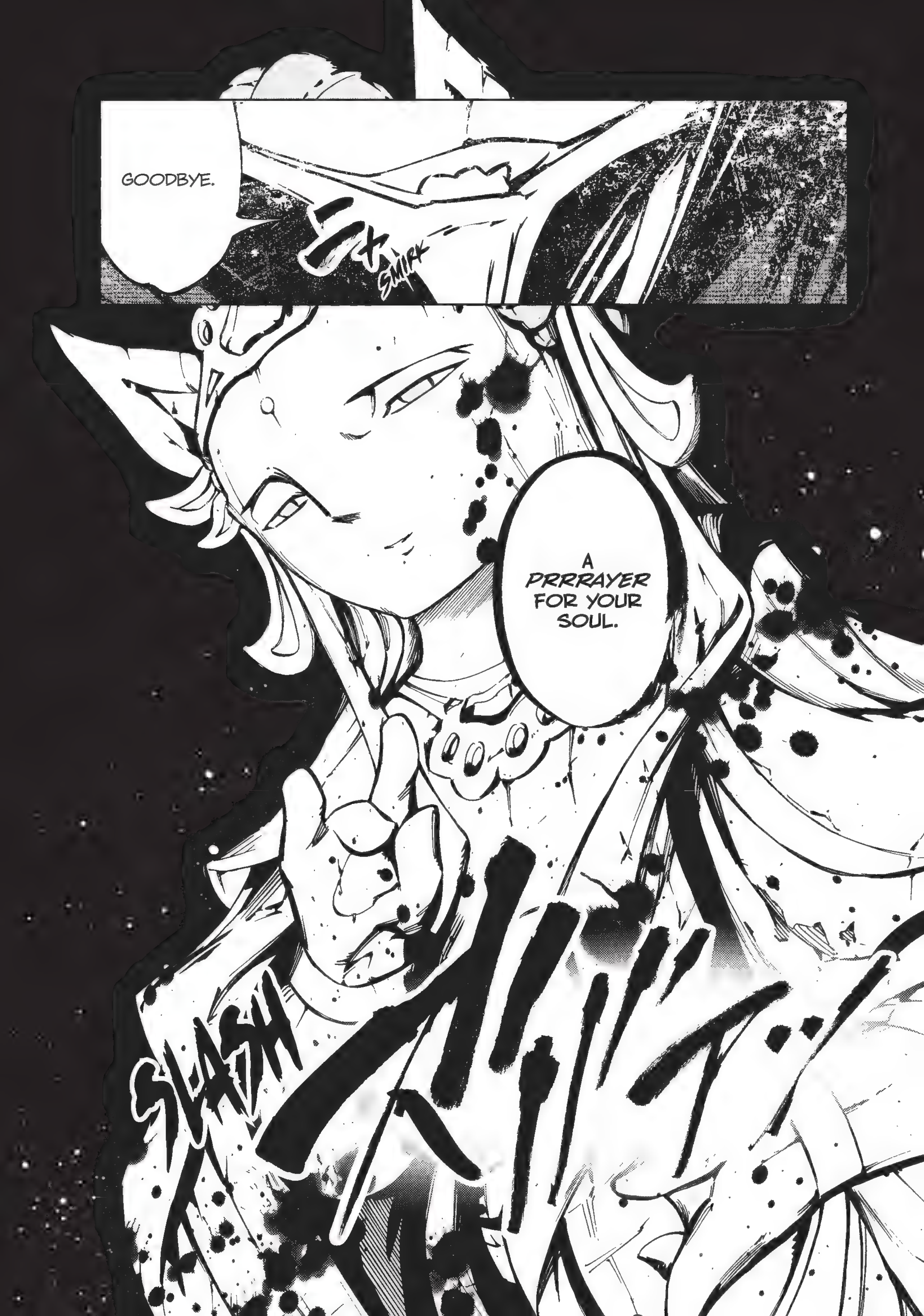

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'RE THAT PUNK KITTEN I RAN INTO IN TOWN YESTERDAY.
?!


THAT WAS GOOD THINKING, ATTACKING ME IN MY SLEEP, BUT UNFORTUNATELY,
I HAVEN'T SLEPT MUCH SINCE *THAT DAY.* WHEN I SLEEP, *HE* APPEARS.
...
RRCH
THE RED WARRIOR.

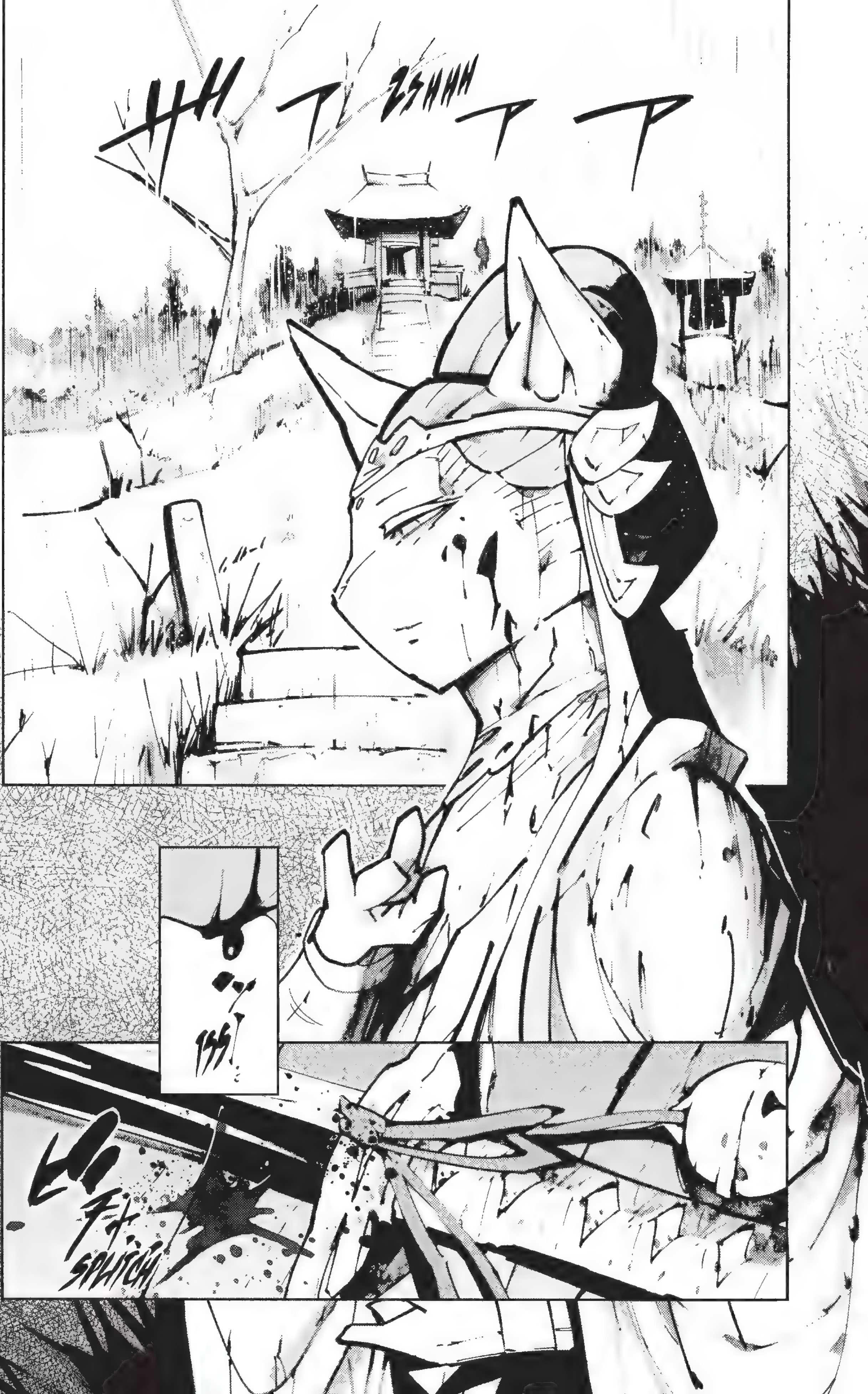

THANKS TO MY INSOMNIA, I'VE MASTERED THE UNUSUAL ABILITY TO MAKE MY PRESENCE UNDETECTABLE WHILE AWAKE, SO I NEVER WANT FOR FOOD.
...
FUNNY, ISN'T IT?
I WAS THERE, HOLDING THAT GRAIN OF RICE.
BUT NOT EVEN THE BIRDS TOOK NOTICE OF ME.

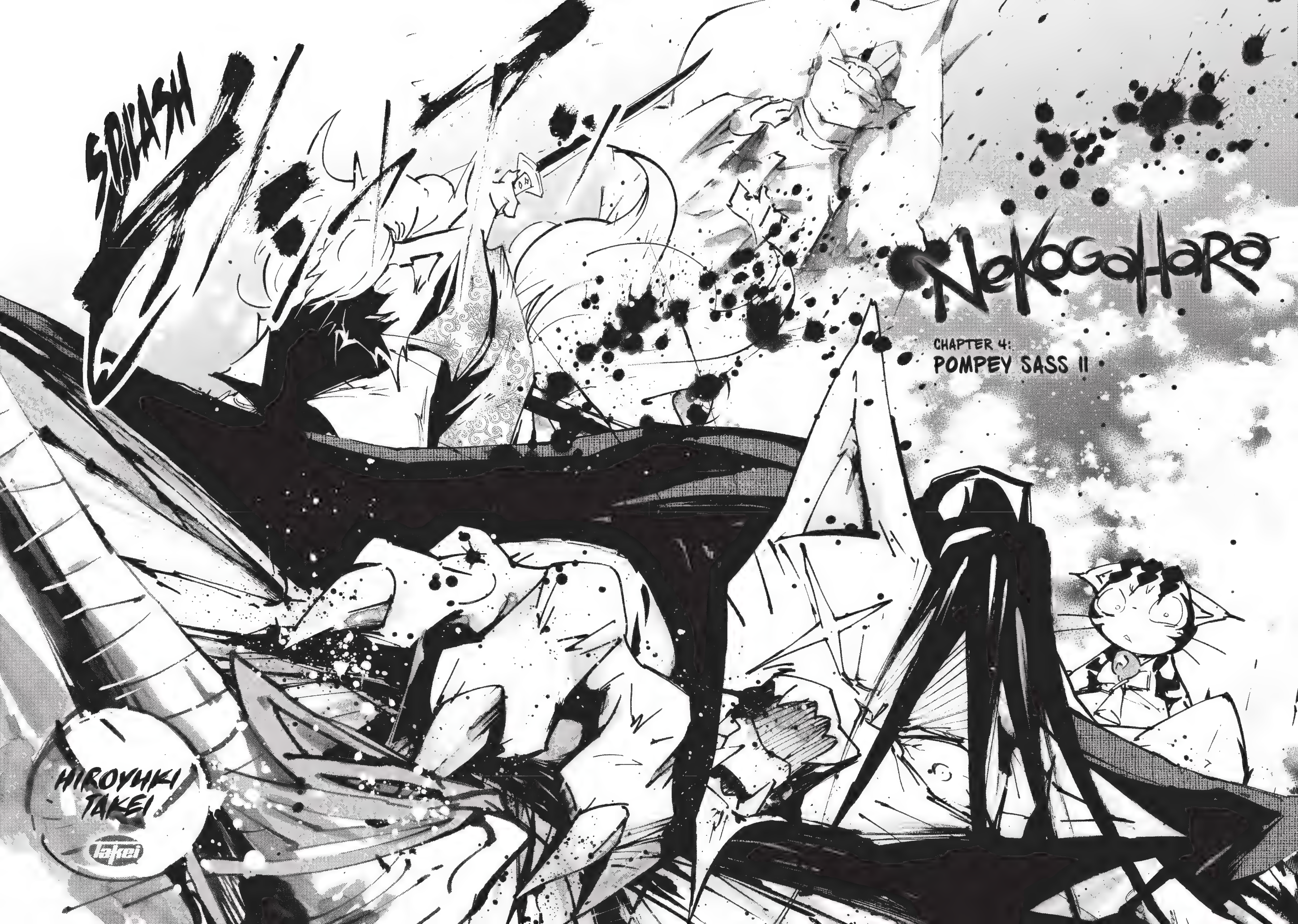

WELL, I *AM* ON A JOURNEY TO FIND MY FINAL RESTING PLACE.
IT'S A VERY APPROPRIATE ABILITY FOR A CAT WHO KEEPS LIVING THOUGH DEAD.
TO FIND... YOUR FINAL RESTING PLACE?
...
WE'VE GONE OFF TOPIC. I ADMIRE YOUR PROMPTNESS IN COMING TO AVENGE YOUR FRIENDS, BUT YOU'VE GONE AND FORGOTTEN MY ONE PIECE OF ADVICE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT KATANA?


YOU CANNOT SLAY ME WITH ANOTHER CAT'S WEAPON.
EEP...!
BAH
H-! HELP ME, SHISHIWAKASA...
BECAUSE IT DOES NOT SHARE YOUR DESIRE TO KILL ME.
OH.


GOODBYE.
SMIRK
A *PRRRAYER* FOR YOUR SOUL.
SLASH

猫ヶ原
NeKoGaHaRa
ネコガハラ

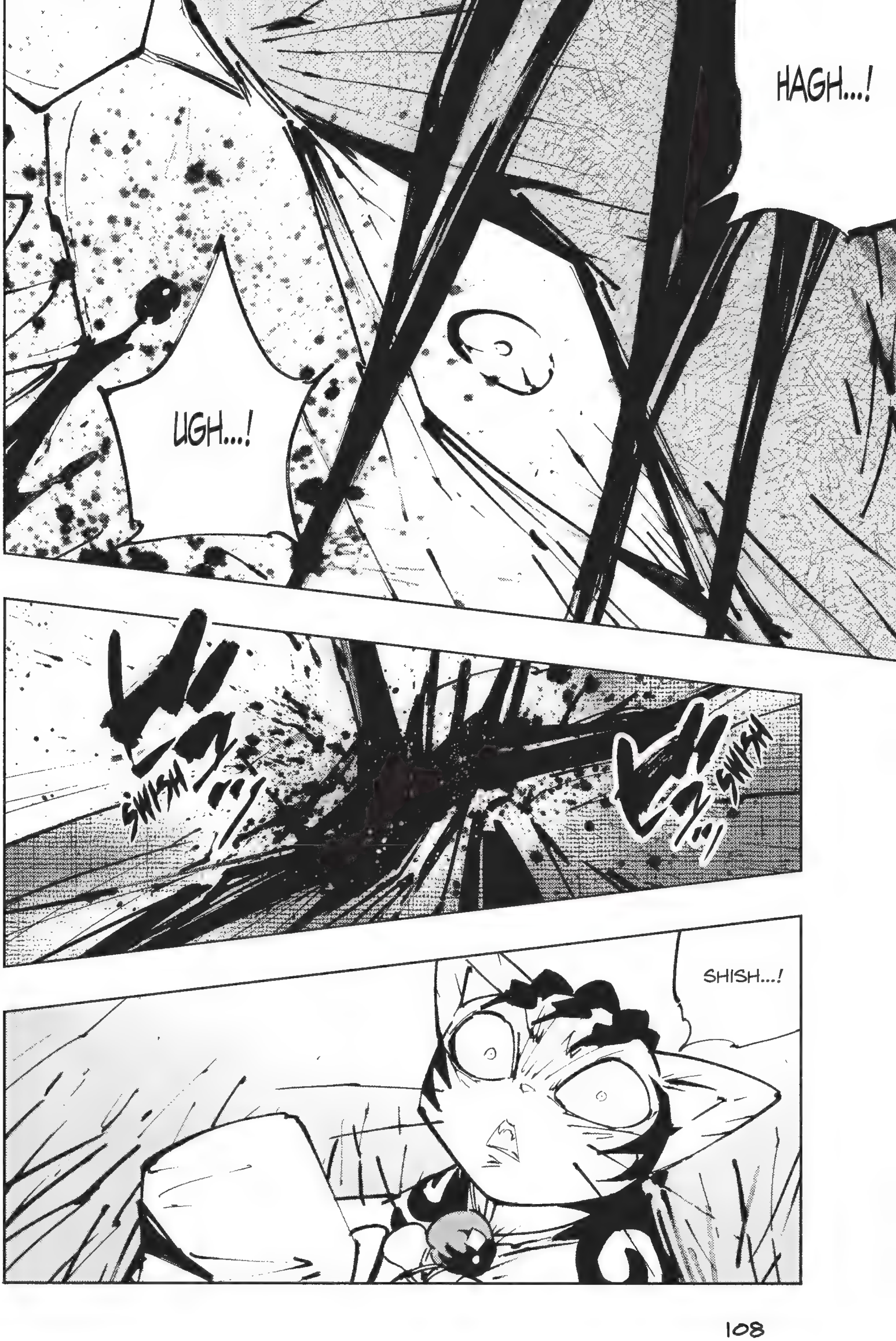

ザァァァ
ZSHHH
TSS
ビチャ
SPLTCH

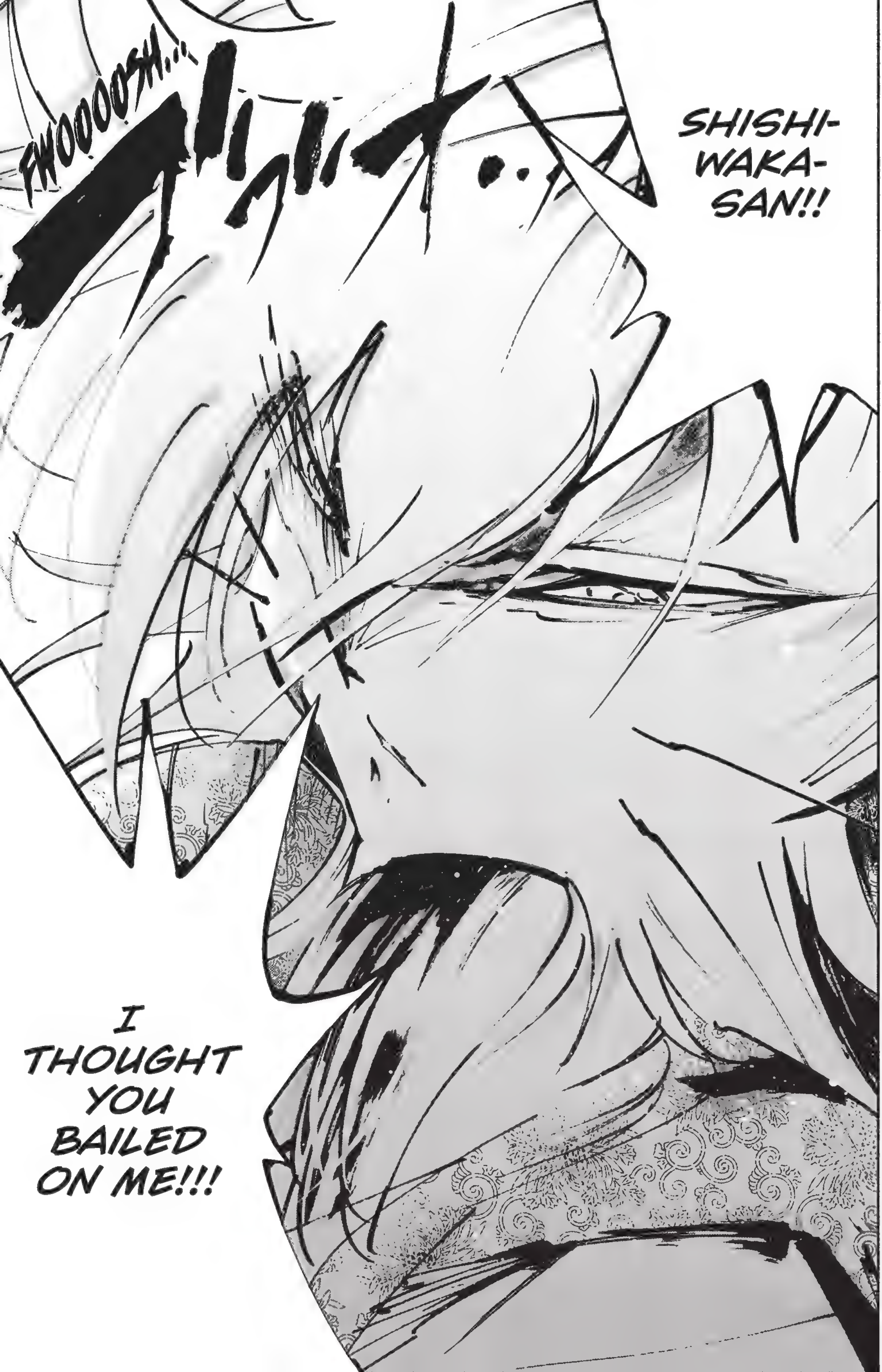


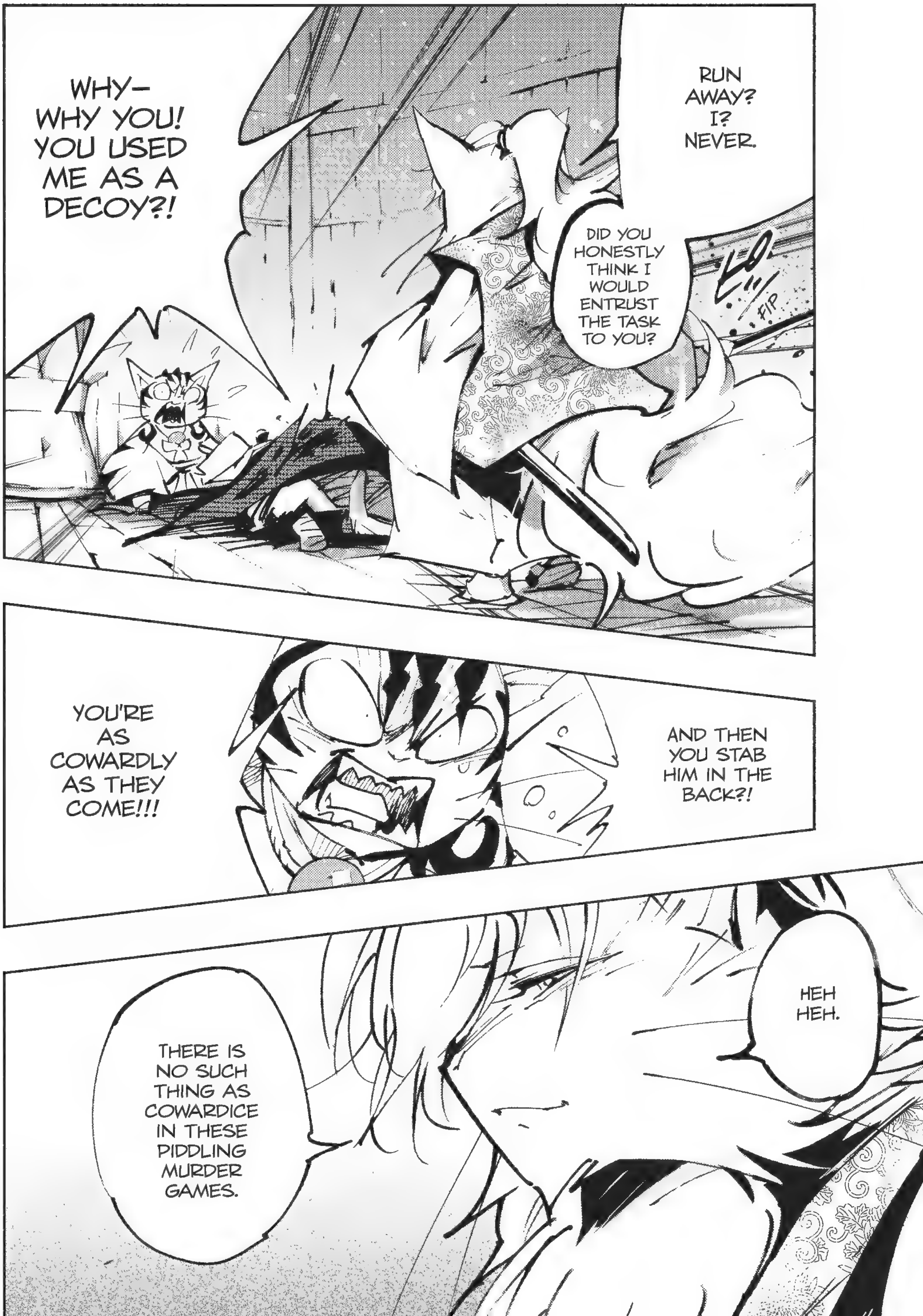
NEKOGAHARA

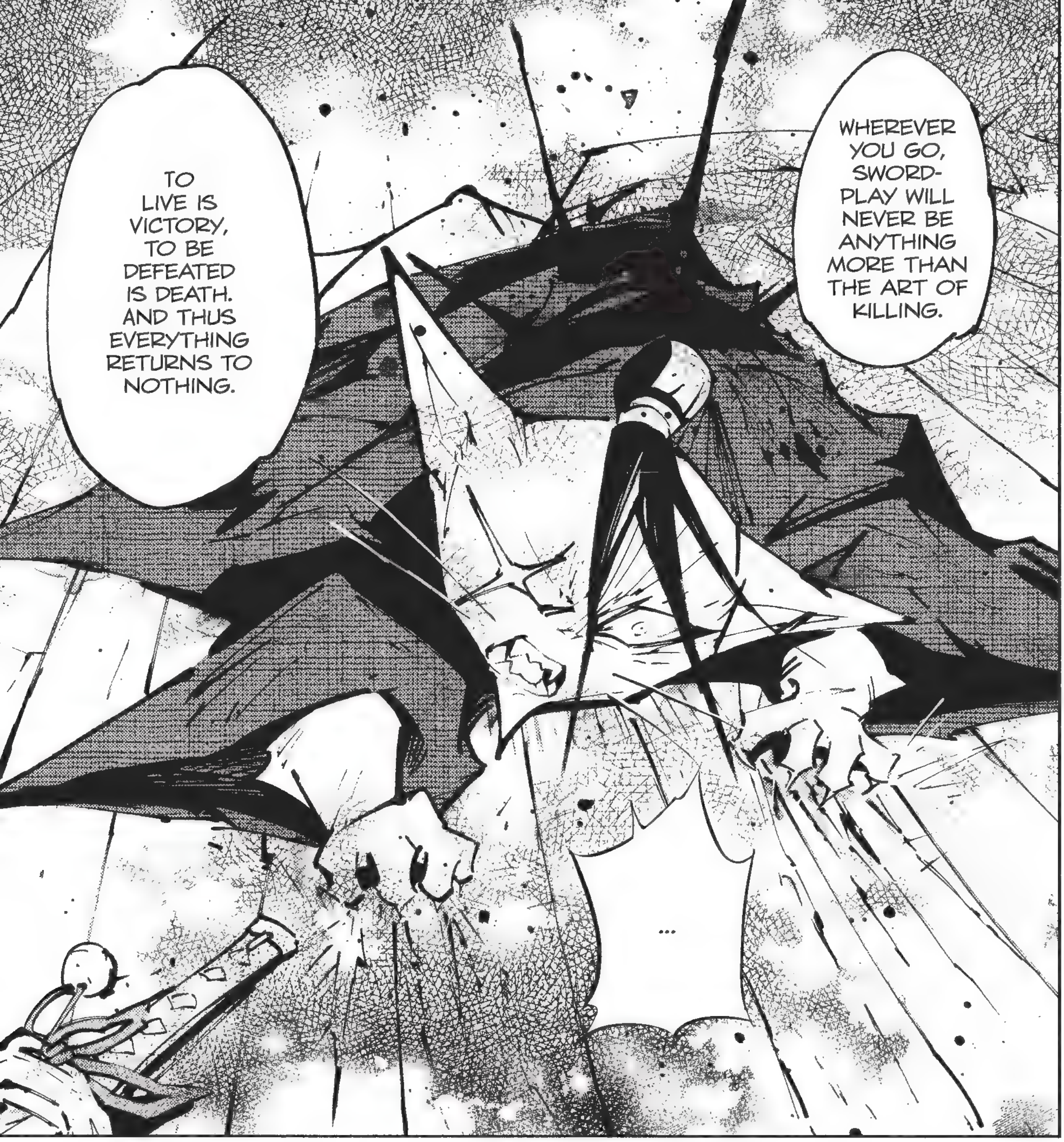
CHAPTER 4:
POMPEY SASS II

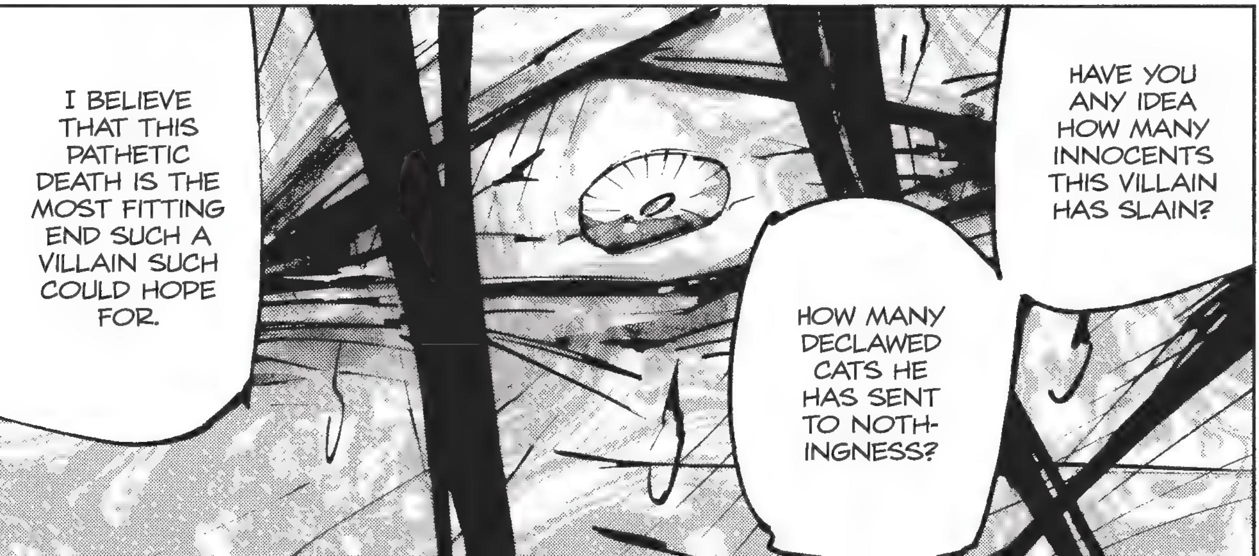
HIROYUKI TAKEI

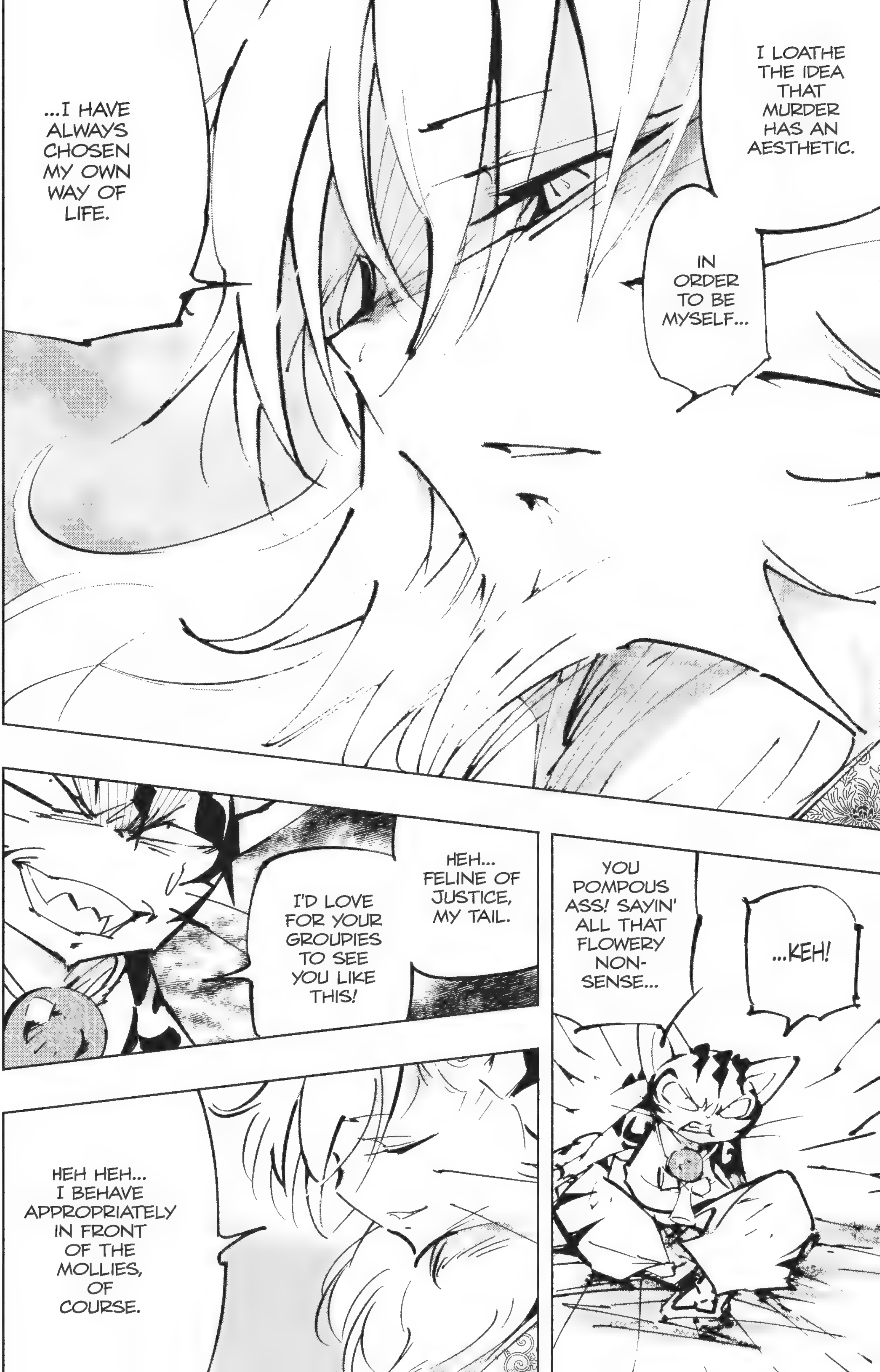

HAGH...!
UGH...!
SWISH
SWISH
SHISH...!

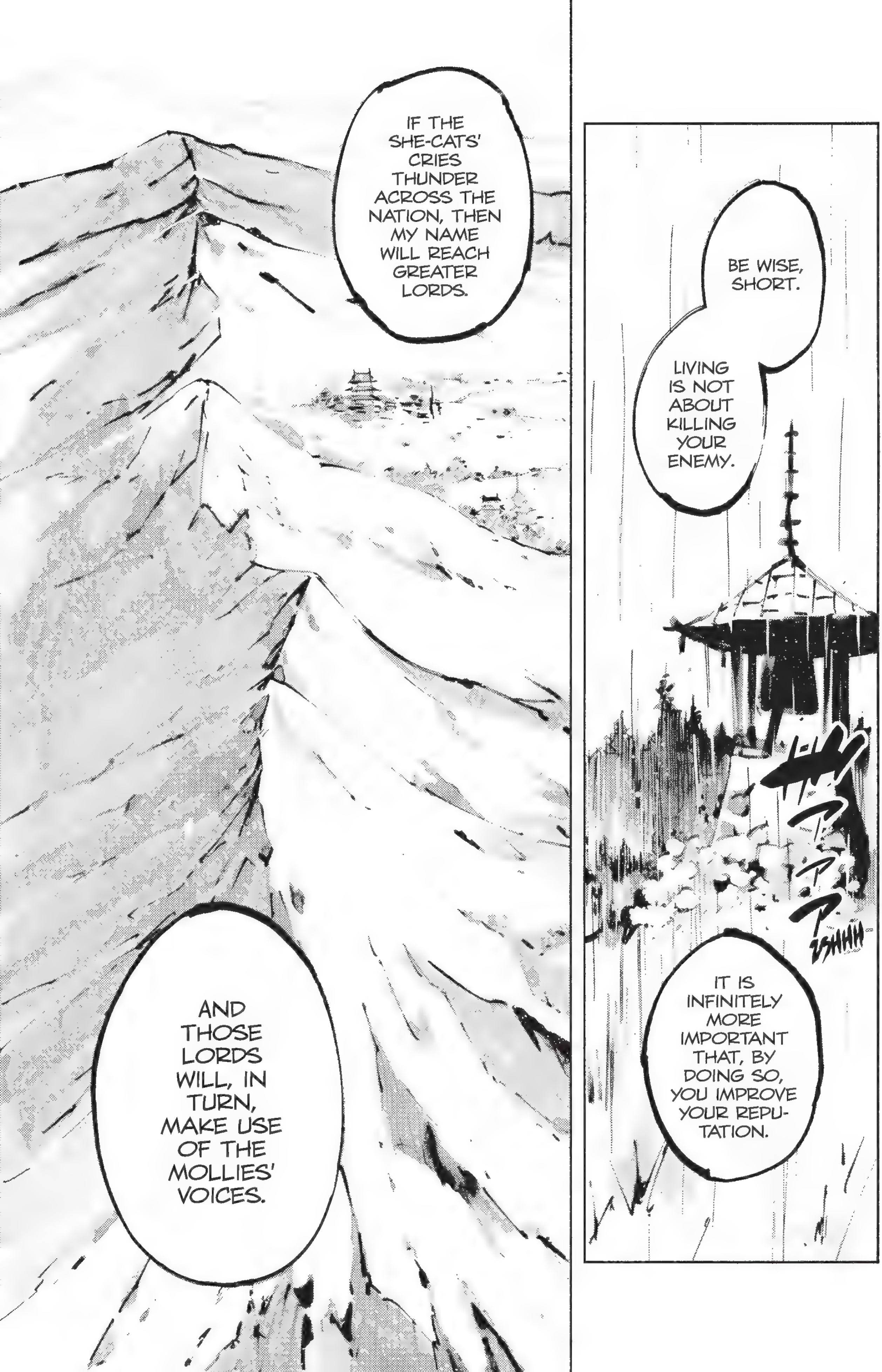

FWOOOOSH...
SHISHI-
WAKA-
SAN!!
I THOUGHT YOU BAILED ON ME!!!

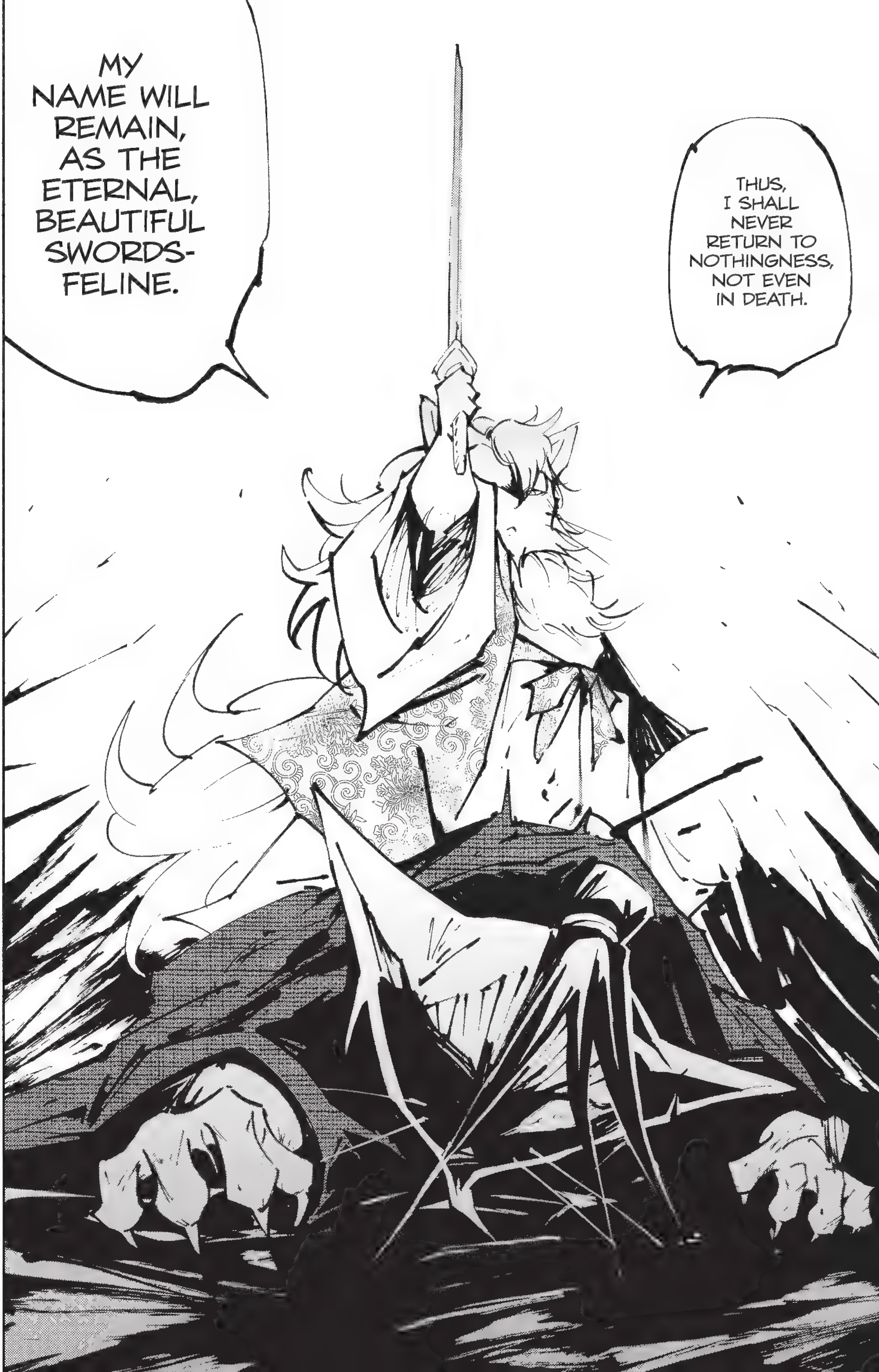

RUN AWAY? I? NEVER.
DID YOU HONESTLY THINK I WOULD ENTRUST THE TASK TO YOU?
FIP
WHY— WHY YOU! YOU USED ME AS A DECOY?!
AND THEN YOU STAB HIM IN THE BACK?!
YOU'RE AS COWARDLY AS THEY COME!!!
HEH HEH.
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS COWARDICE IN THESE PIDDLING MURDER GAMES.

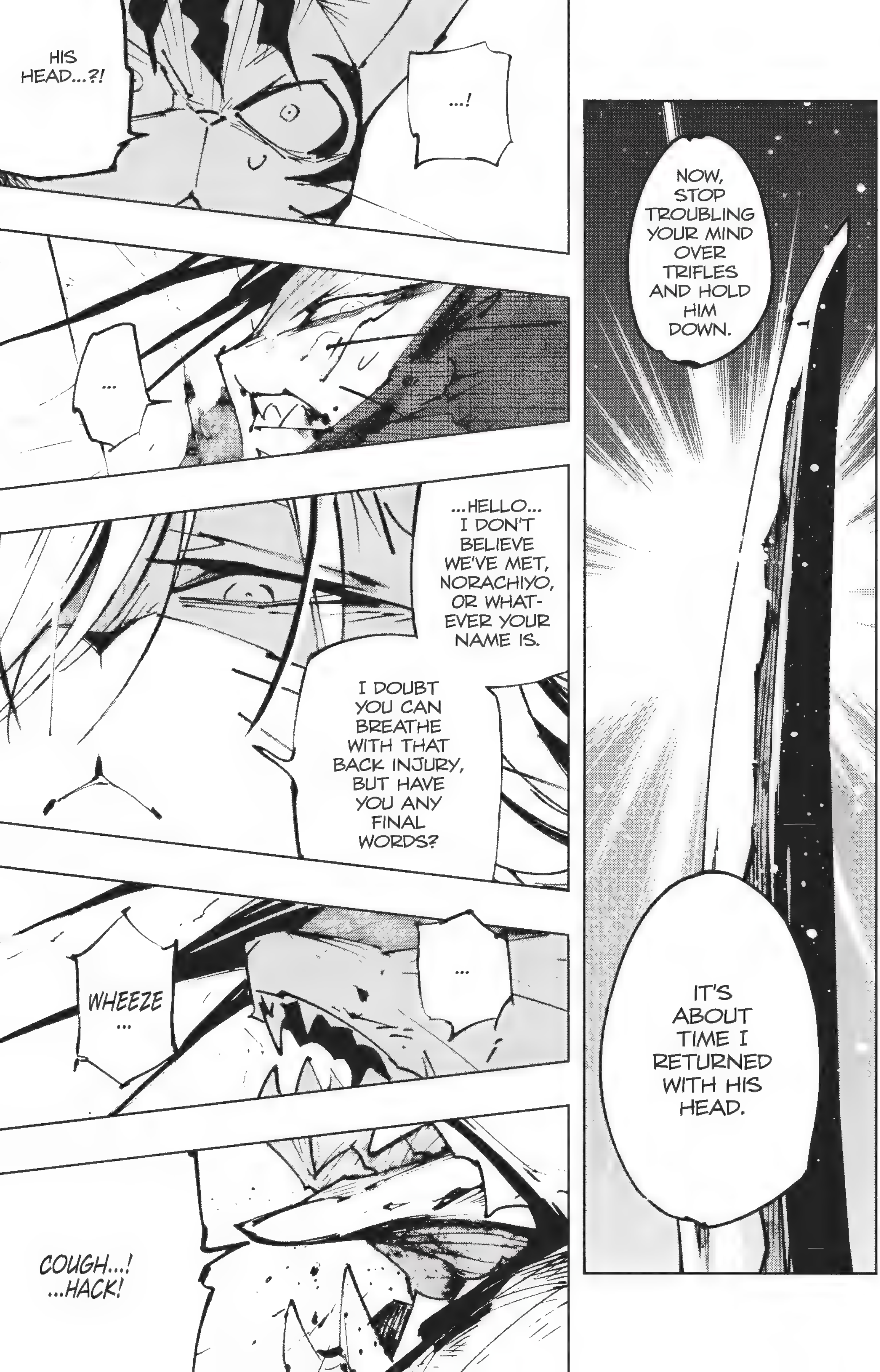

WHEREVER YOU GO, SWORDPLAY WILL NEVER BE ANYTHING MORE THAN THE ART OF KILLING.
TO LIVE IS VICTORY, TO BE DEFEATED IS DEATH. AND THUS EVERYTHING RETURNS TO NOTHING.
...

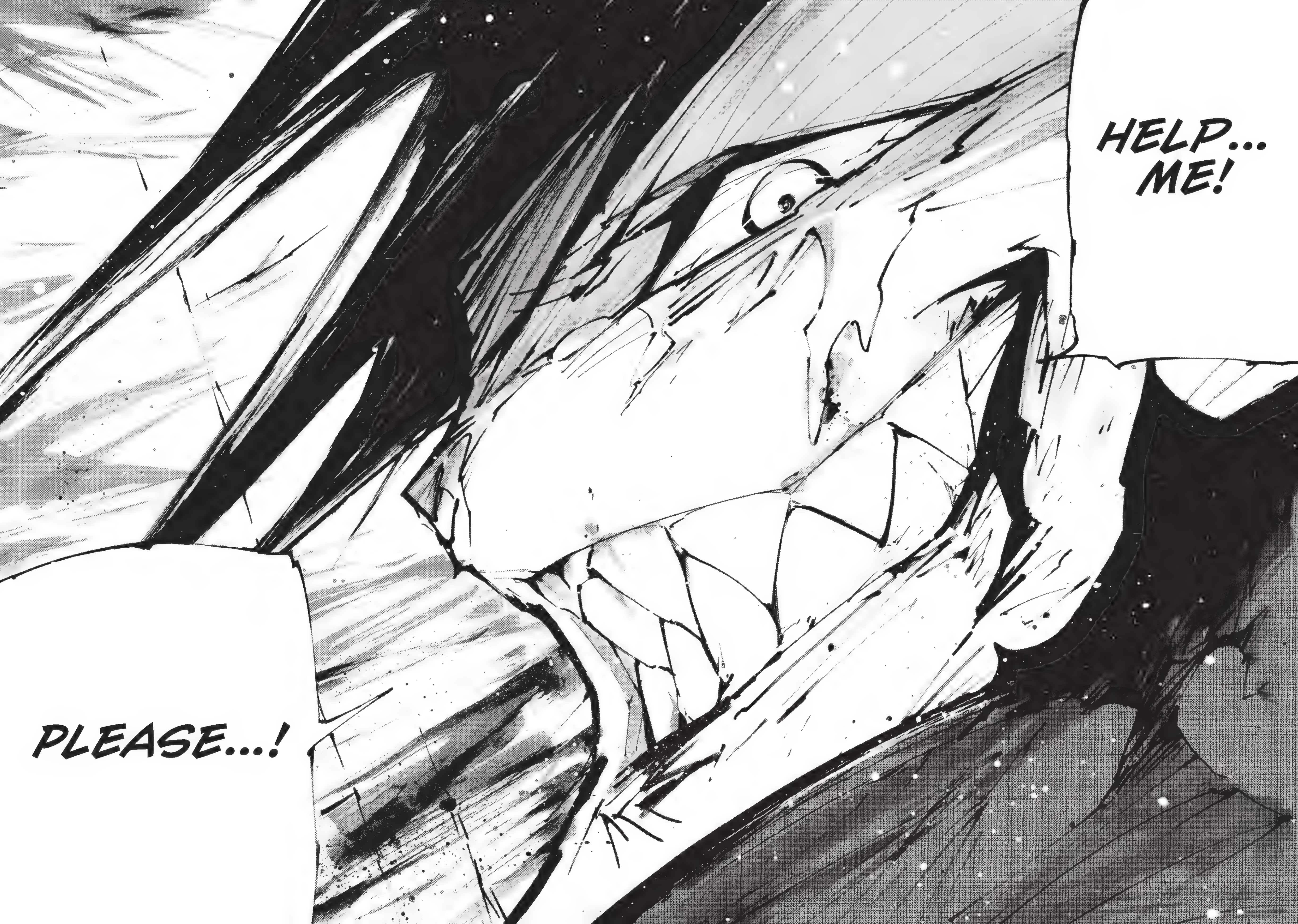

HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MANY INNOCENTS THIS VILLAIN HAS SLAIN?
HOW MANY DECLAWED CATS HE HAS SENT TO NOTHINGNESS?
I BELIEVE THAT THIS PATHETIC DEATH IS THE MOST FITTING END SUCH A VILLAIN SUCH COULD HOPE FOR.

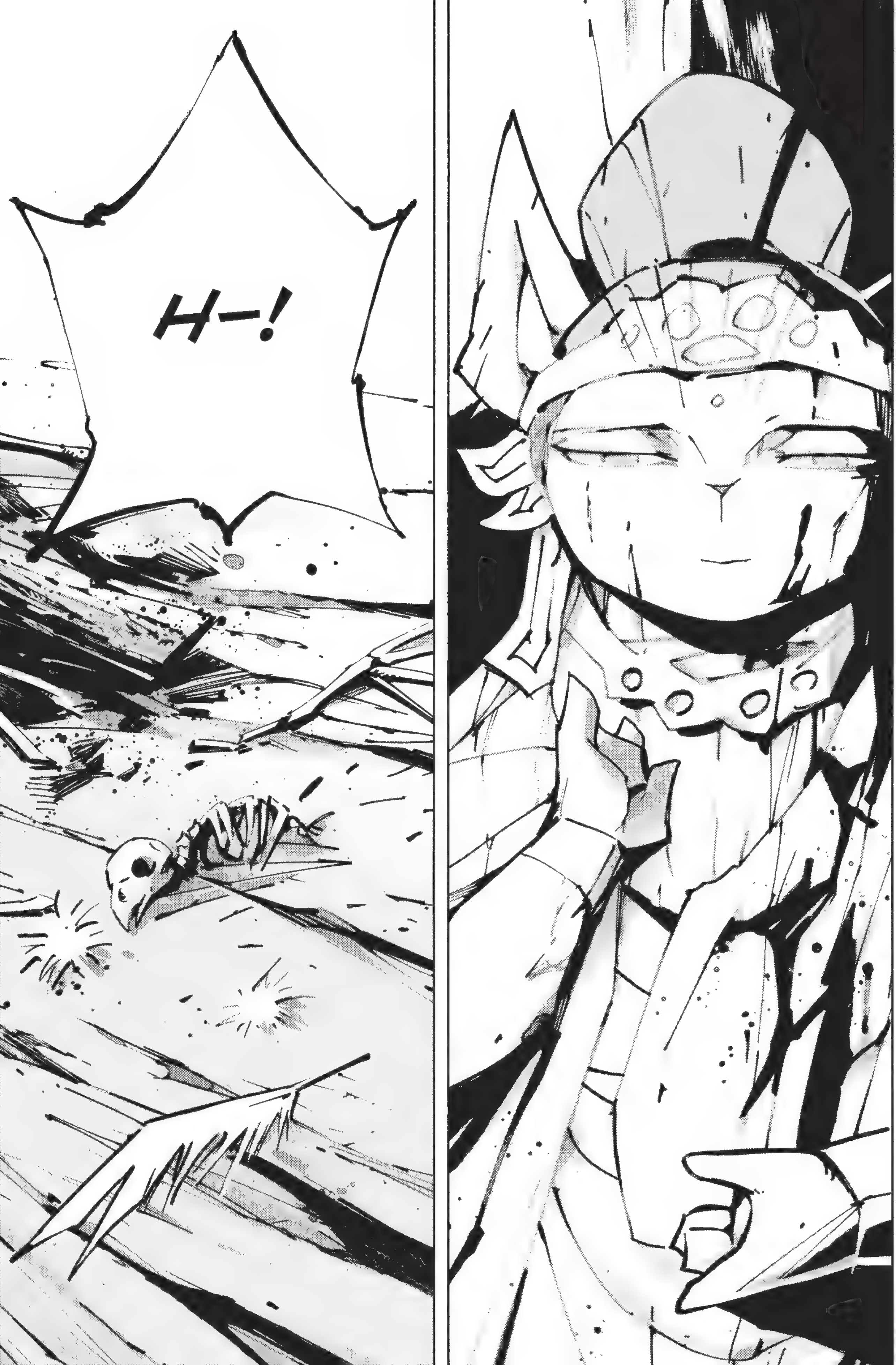

I LOATHE THE IDEA THAT MURDER HAS AN AESTHETIC.
IN ORDER TO BE MYSELF...
...I HAVE ALWAYS CHOSEN MY OWN WAY OF LIFE.
HEH... FELINE OF JUSTICE, MY TAIL.
I'D LOVE FOR YOUR GROUPIES TO SEE YOU LIKE THIS!
HEH HEH... I BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY IN FRONT OF THE MOLLIES, OF COURSE.
...KEH!
YOU POMPOUS ASS! SAYIN' ALL THAT FLOWERY NONSENSE...

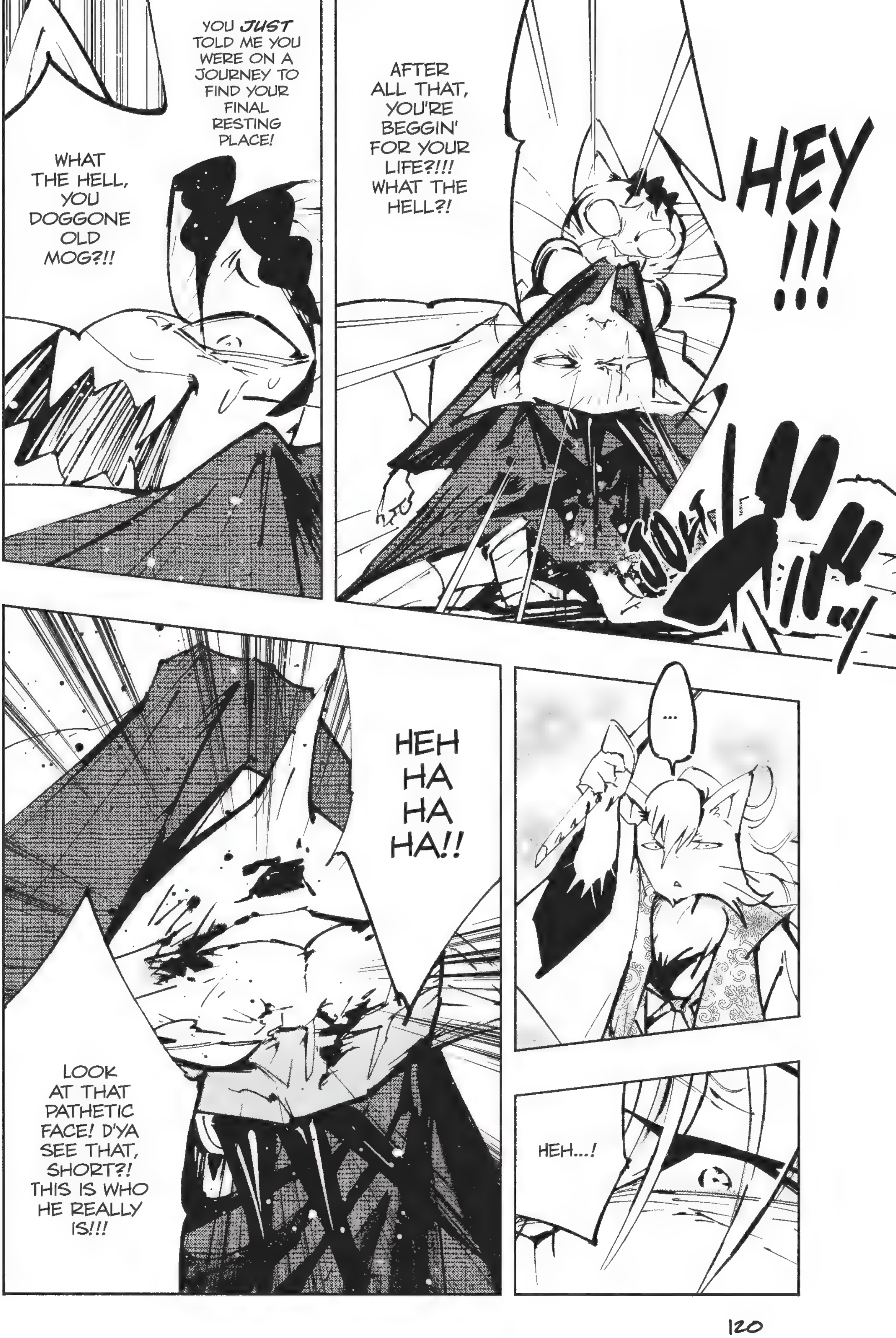

BE WISE, SHORT.
LIVING IS NOT ABOUT KILLING YOUR ENEMY.
ZSHHH
IT IS INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT THAT, BY DOING SO, YOU IMPROVE YOUR REPUTATION.
IF THE SHE-CATS' CRIES THUNDER ACROSS THE NATION, THEN MY NAME WILL REACH GREATER LORDS.
AND THOSE LORDS WILL, IN TURN, MAKE USE OF THE MOLLIES' VOICES.

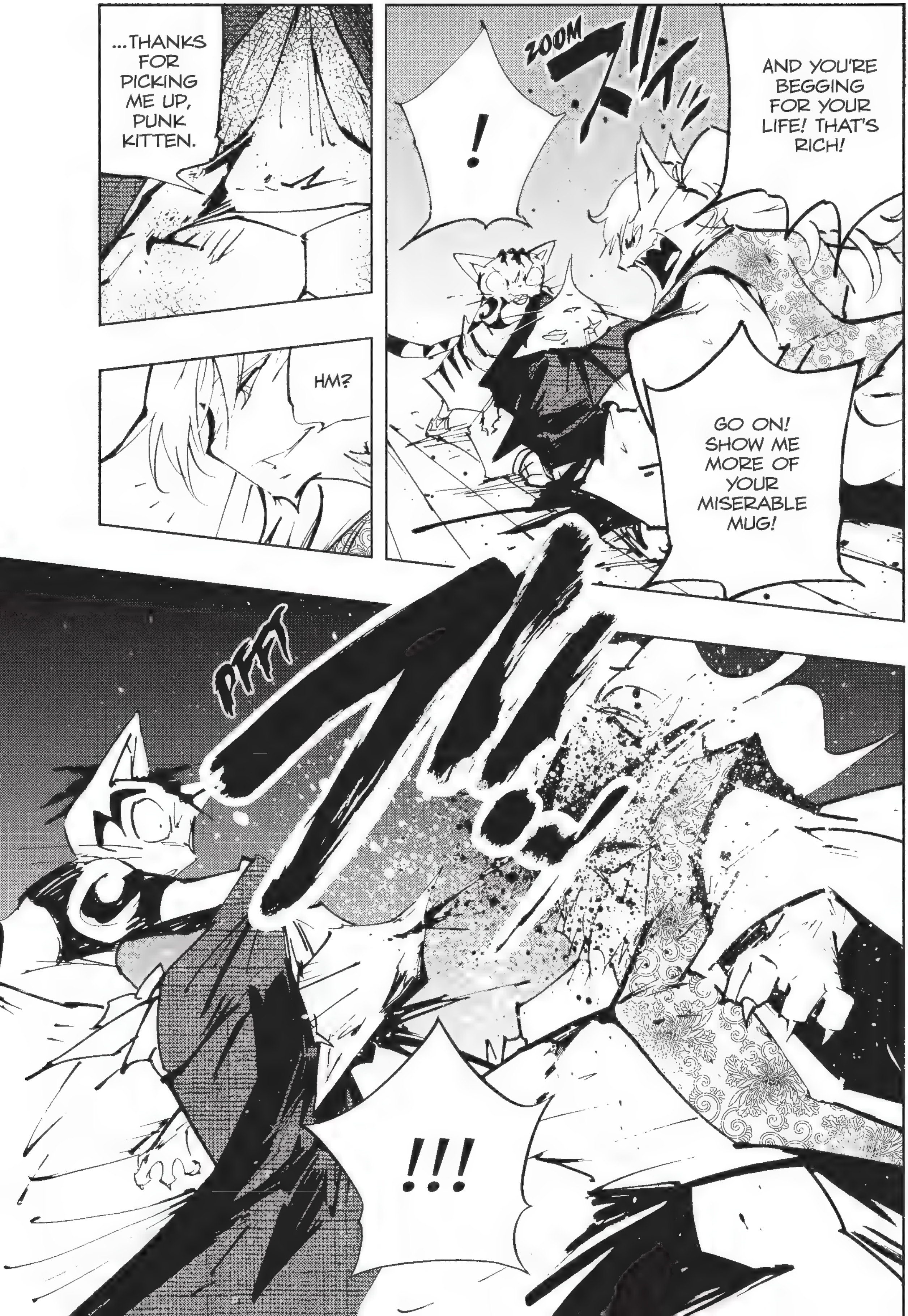

THUS, I SHALL NEVER RETURN TO NOTHINGNESS, NOT EVEN IN DEATH.
MY NAME WILL REMAIN, AS THE ETERNAL, BEAUTIFUL SWORDS-FELINE.

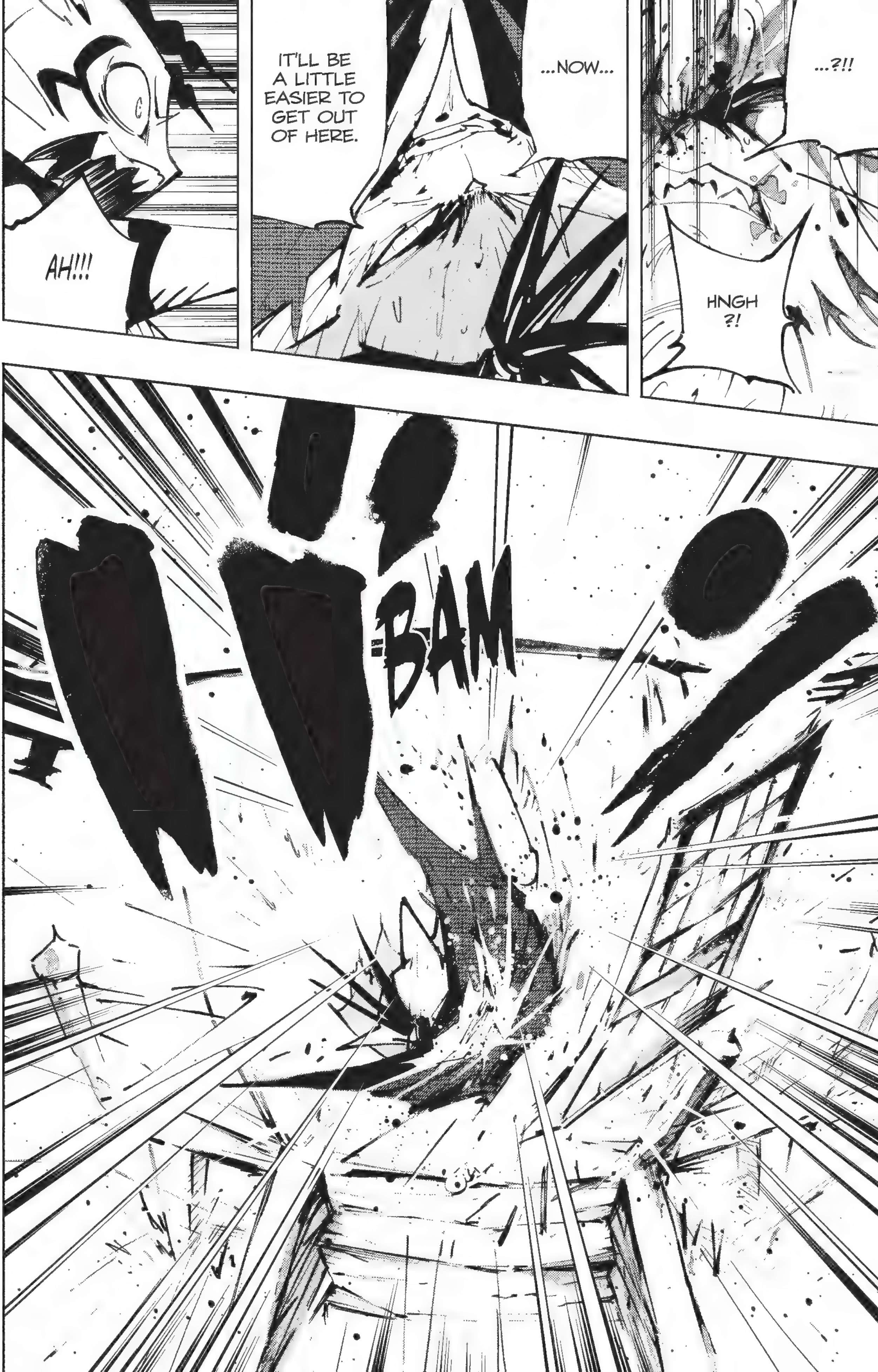

NOW, STOP TROUBLING YOUR MIND OVER TRIFLES AND HOLD HIM DOWN.
IT'S ABOUT TIME I RETURNED WITH HIS HEAD.
...!
HIS HEAD...?!
...
...HELLO... I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE MET, NORACHIYO, OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS.
I DOUBT YOU CAN BREATHE WITH THAT BACK INJURY, BUT HAVE YOU ANY FINAL WORDS?
...
WHEEZE...
COUGH...! ...HACK!

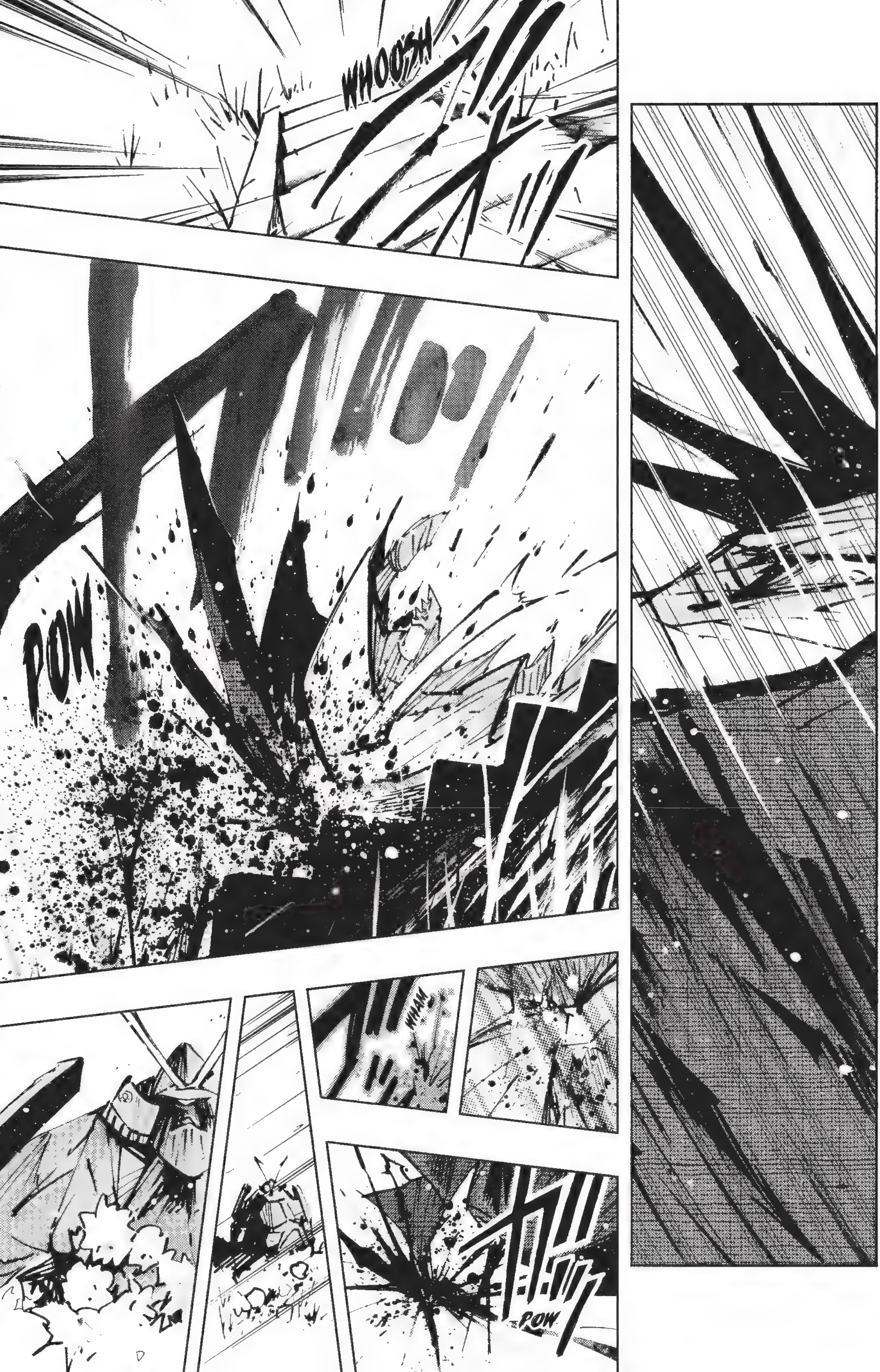

HELP... ME!
PLEASE...!

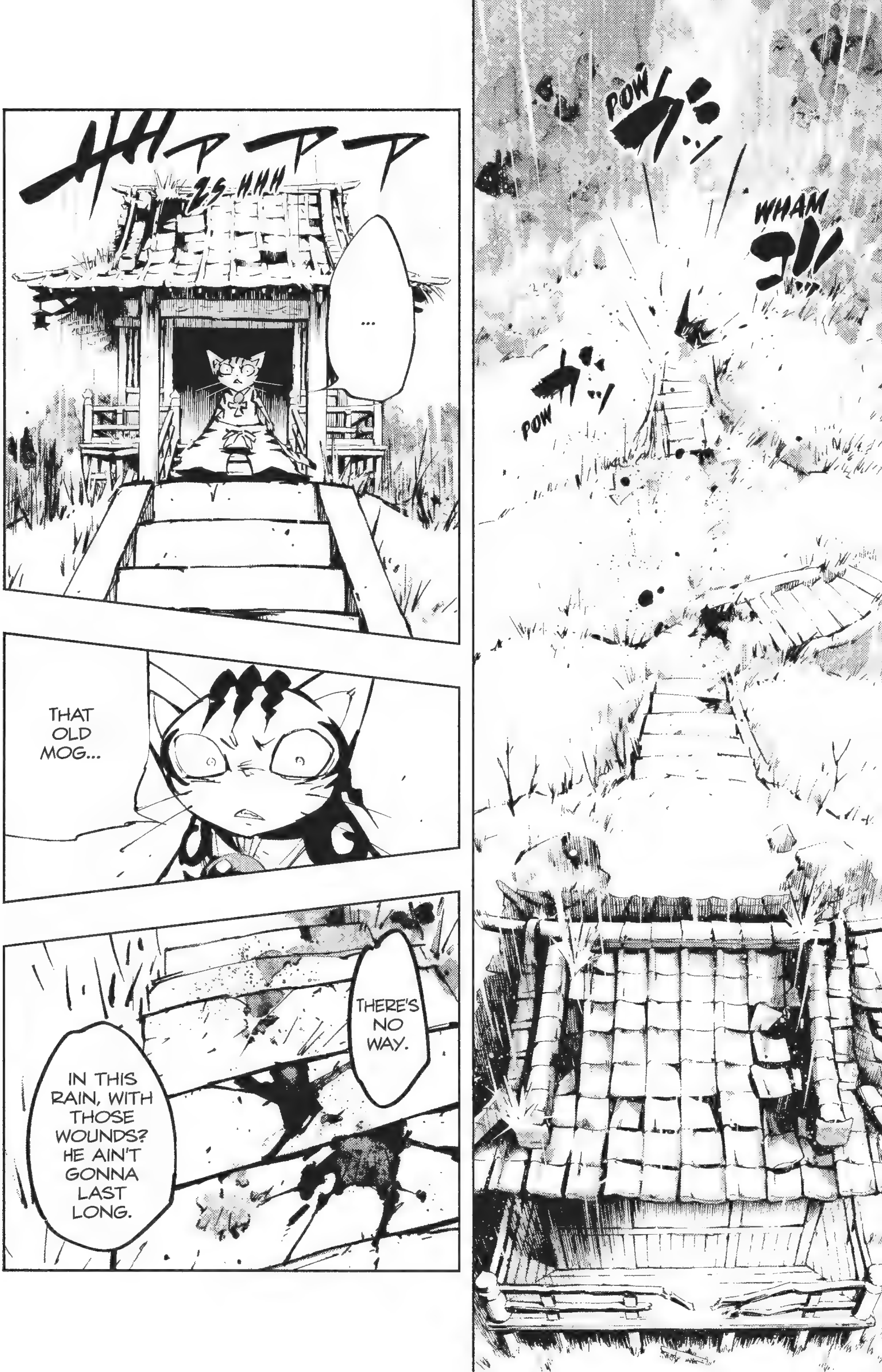

H—!

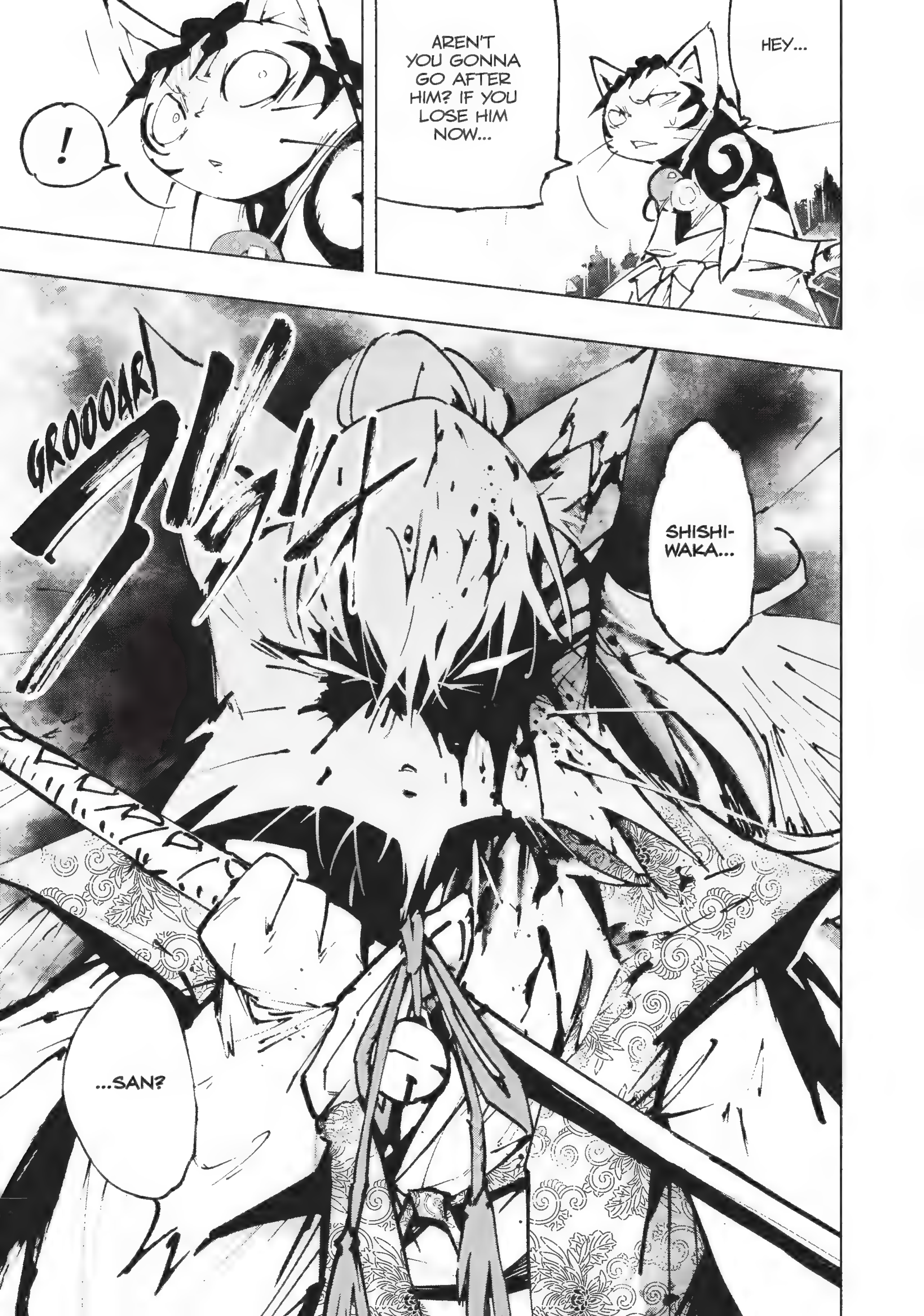

WHAT THE HELL, YOU DOGGONE OLD MOG?!!
YOU *JUST* TOLD ME YOU WERE ON A JOURNEY TO FIND YOUR FINAL RESTING PLACE!
AFTER ALL THAT, YOU'RE BEGGIN' FOR YOUR LIFE?!!! WHAT THE HELL?!
HEY!!!
JOLT
HEH HA HA HA!!
LOOK AT THAT PATHETIC FACE! D'YA SEE THAT, SHORT?! THIS IS WHO HE REALLY IS!!!
...
HEH...!

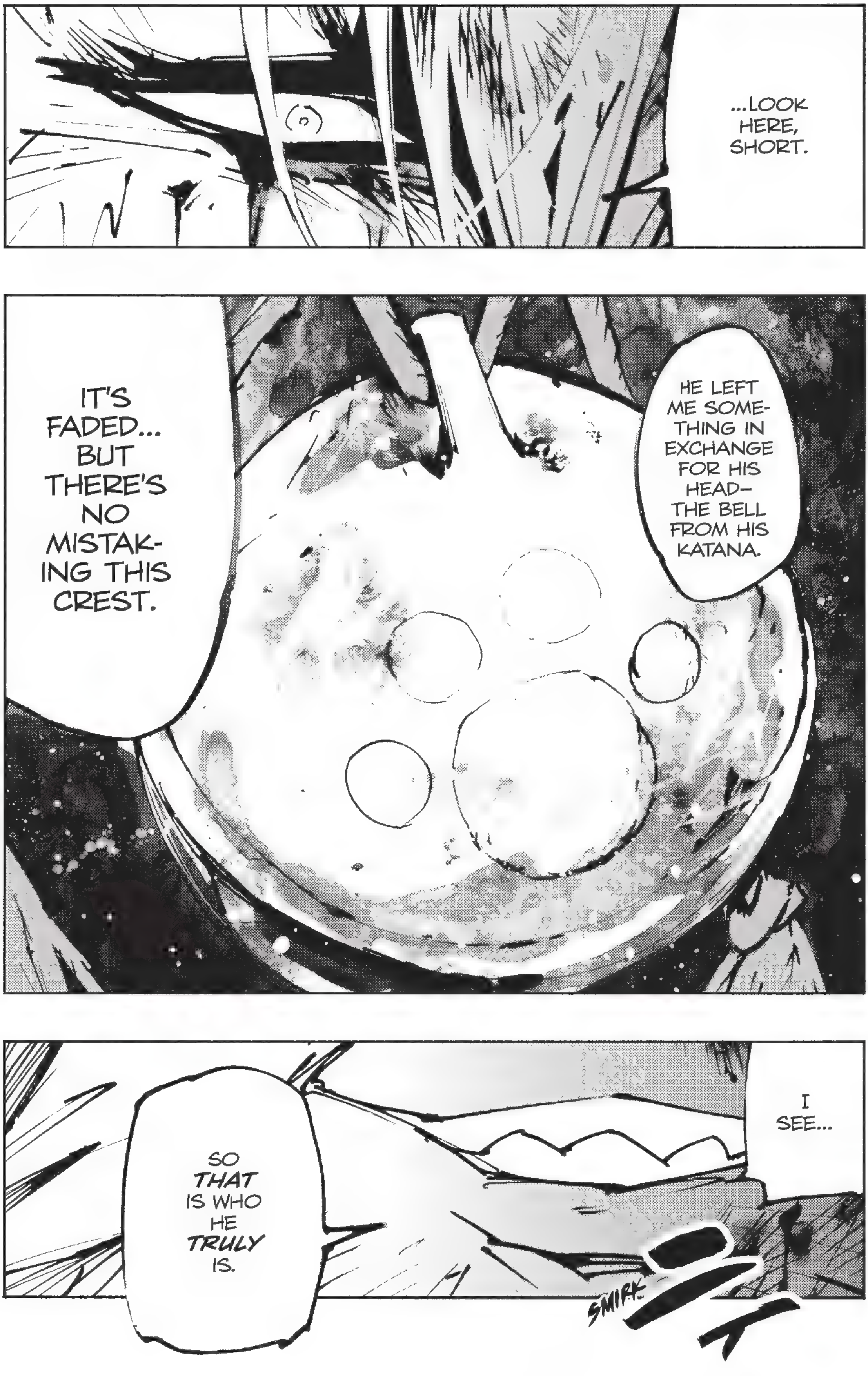

AND YOU'RE BEGGING FOR YOUR LIFE! THAT'S RICH!
GO ON! SHOW ME MORE OF YOUR MISERABLE MUG!
ZOOM
!
...THANKS FOR PICKING ME UP, PUNK KITTEN.
HM?
PFFT
!!!

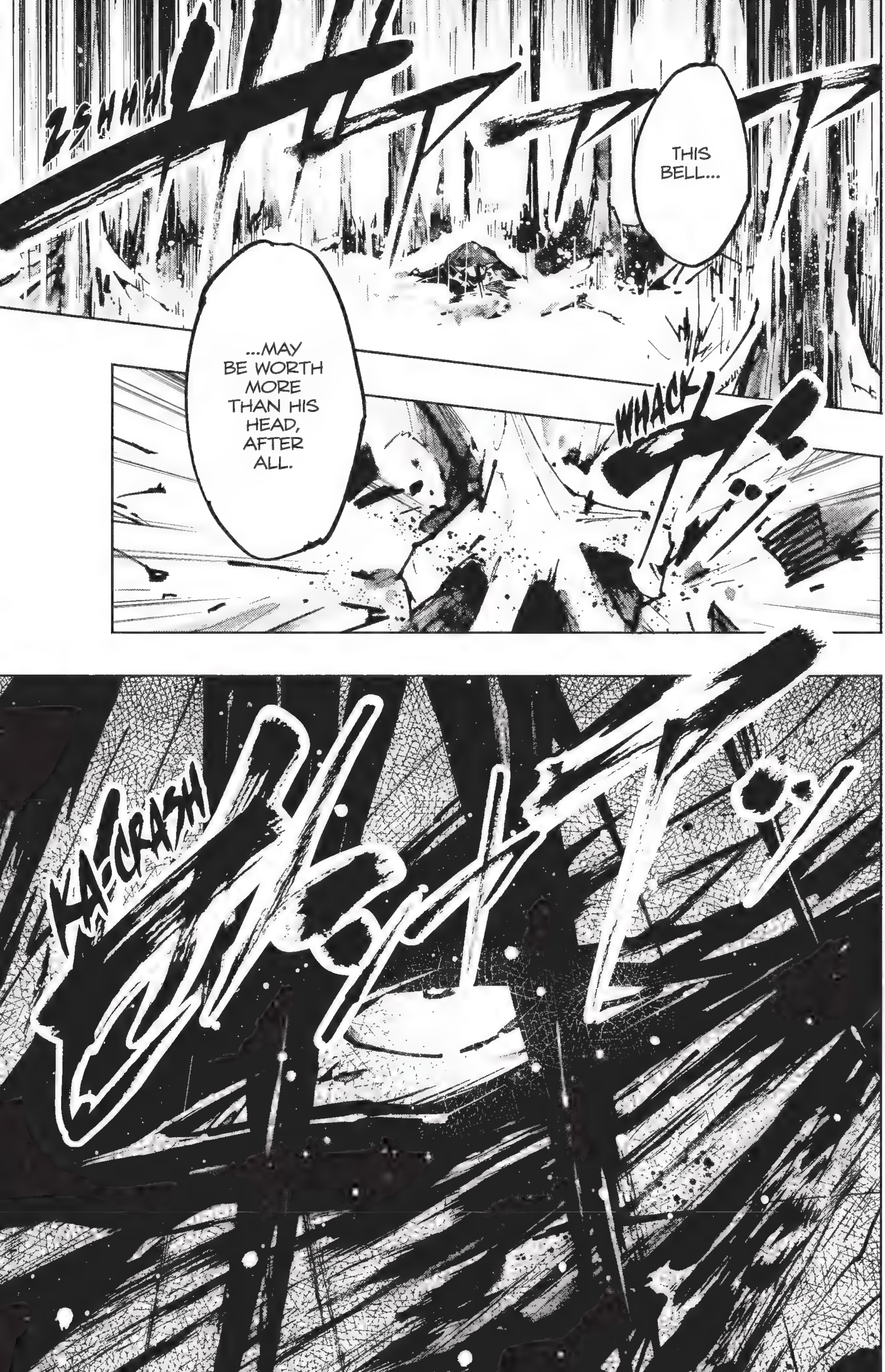

...?!!
HNGH ?!
...NOW...
IT'LL BE A LITTLE EASIER TO GET OUT OF HERE.
AH!!!
BAM


WHOOSH
POW
WHAM
POW


POW
WHAM
POW
SHHHH
...
THAT OLD MOG...
THERE'S NO WAY.
IN THIS RAIN, WITH THOSE WOUNDS? HE AIN'T GONNA LAST LONG.


HEY...
AREN'T YOU GONNA GO AFTER HIM? IF YOU LOSE HIM NOW...
!
SHISHI-WAKA...
GROOOAR!
...SAN?

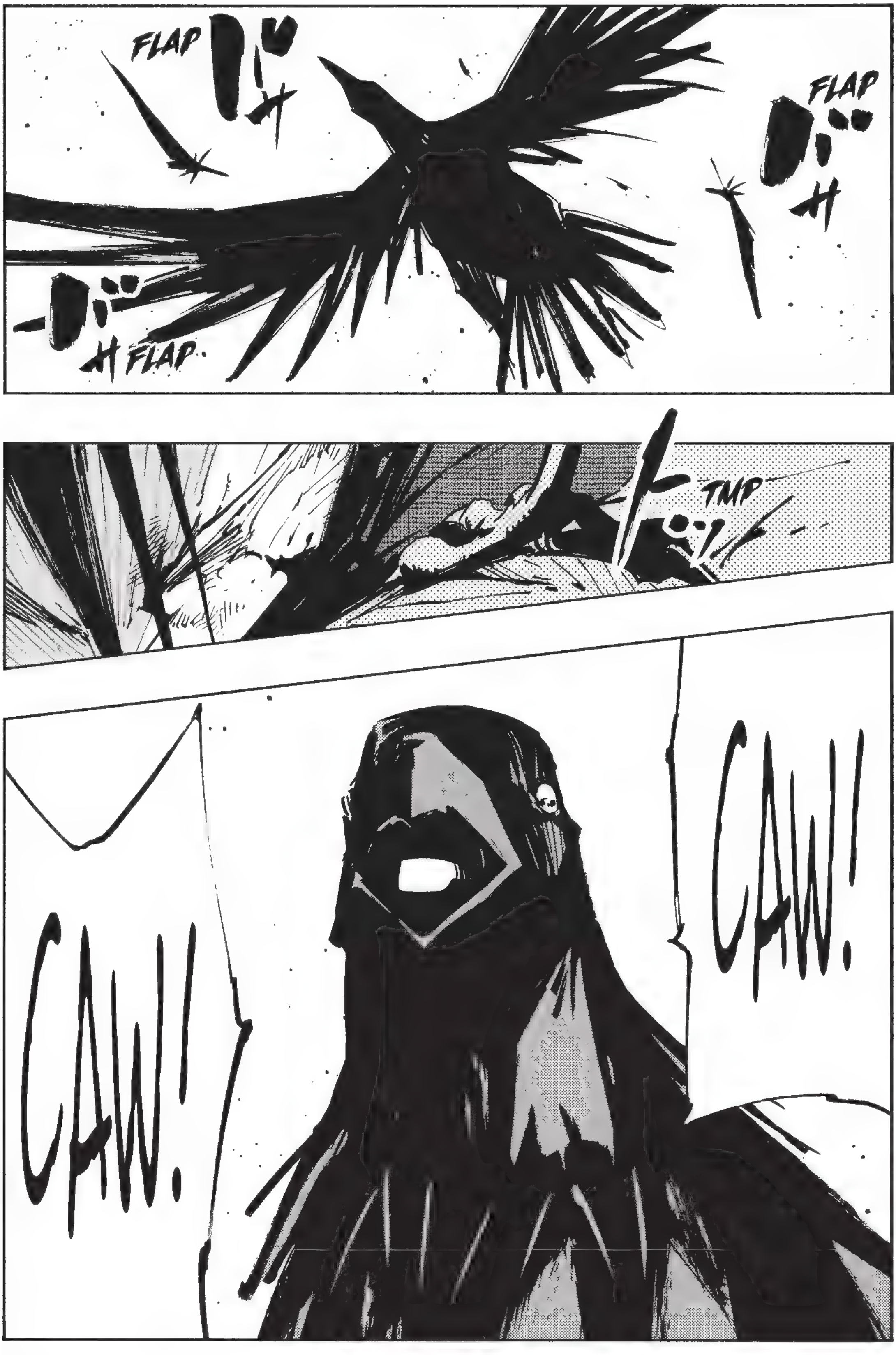

...LOOK HERE, SHORT.
HE LEFT ME SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS HEAD—THE BELL FROM HIS KATANA.
IT'S FADED... BUT THERE'S NO MISTAKING THIS CREST.
I SEE...
SO *THAT* IS WHO HE *TRULY* IS.
SMIRK


THIS BELL...
ZSHHH
...MAY BE WORTH MORE THAN HIS HEAD, AFTER ALL.
WHACK
KA-CRASH

猫ヶ原

NeKoGaHaRa

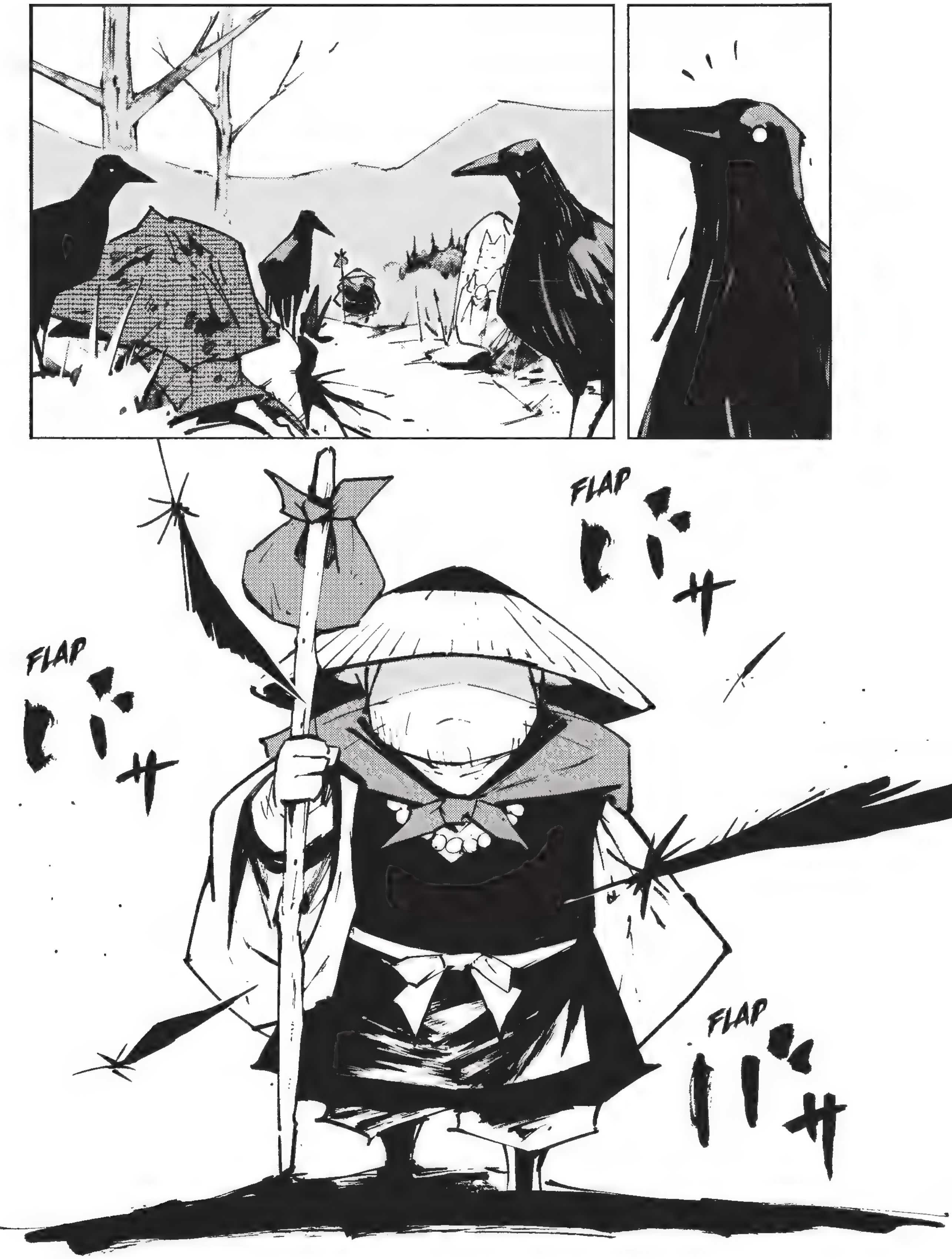
ネコガハラ

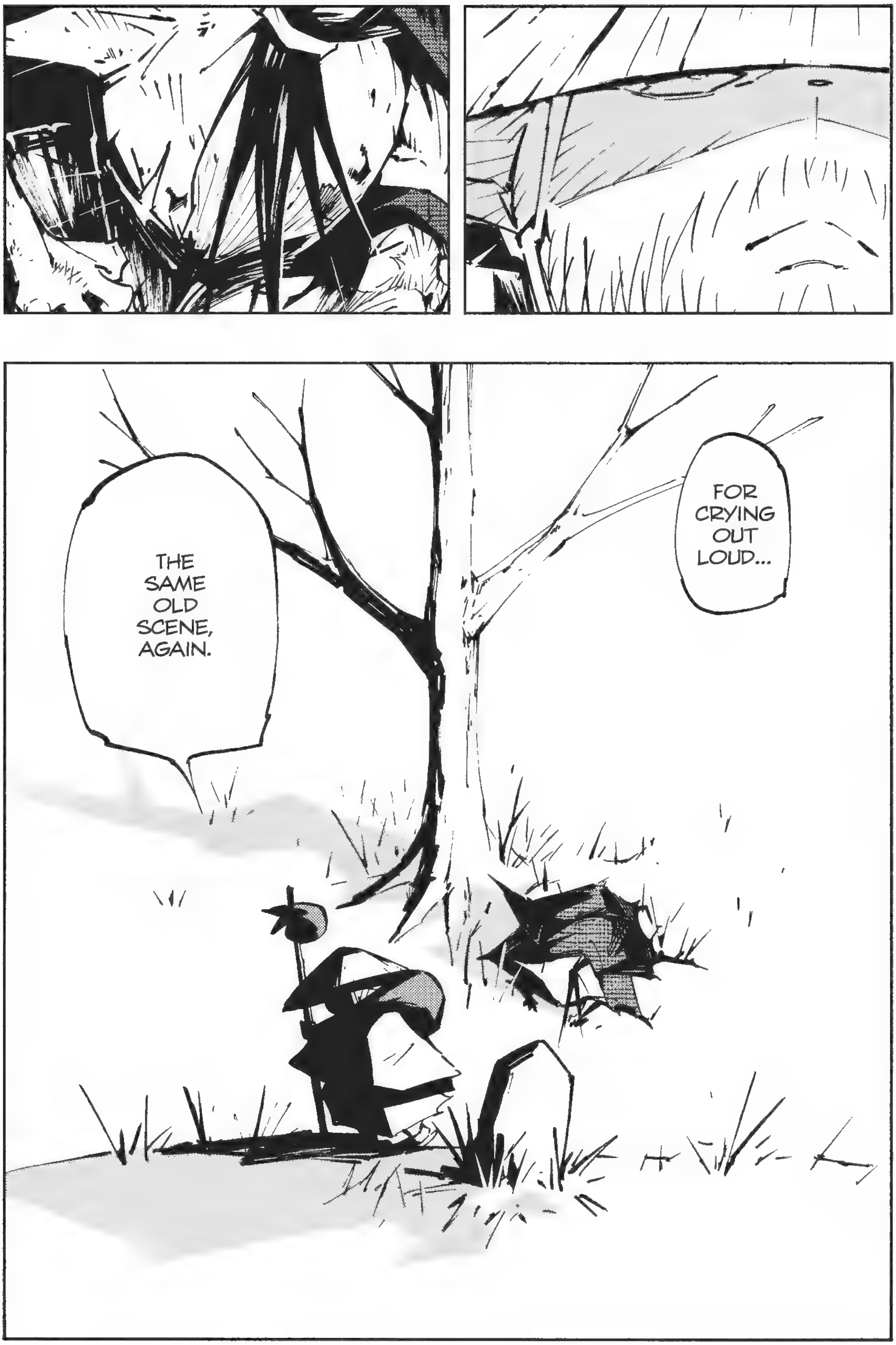

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
TMP
CAW!
CAW!

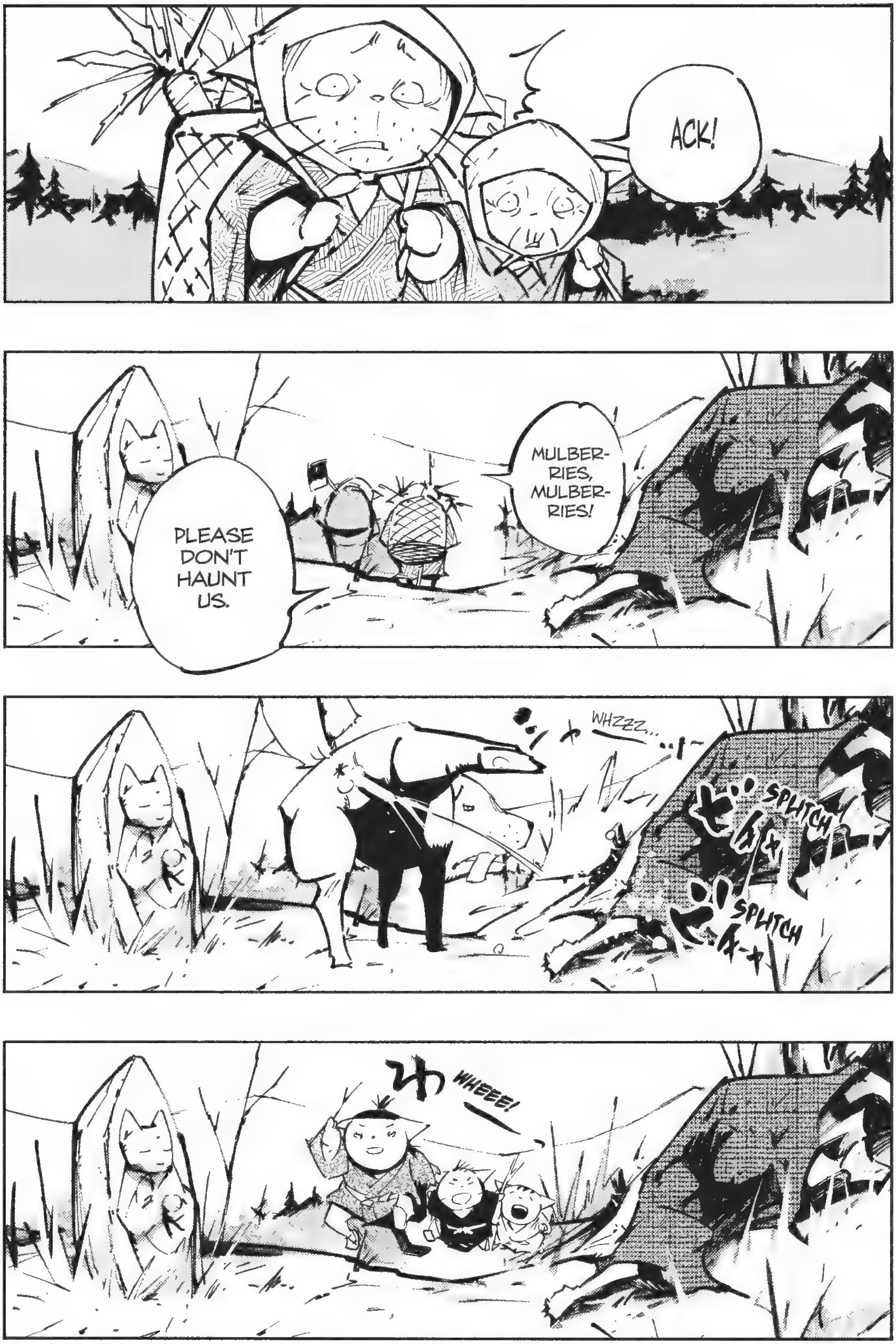
NEKOGAHARA

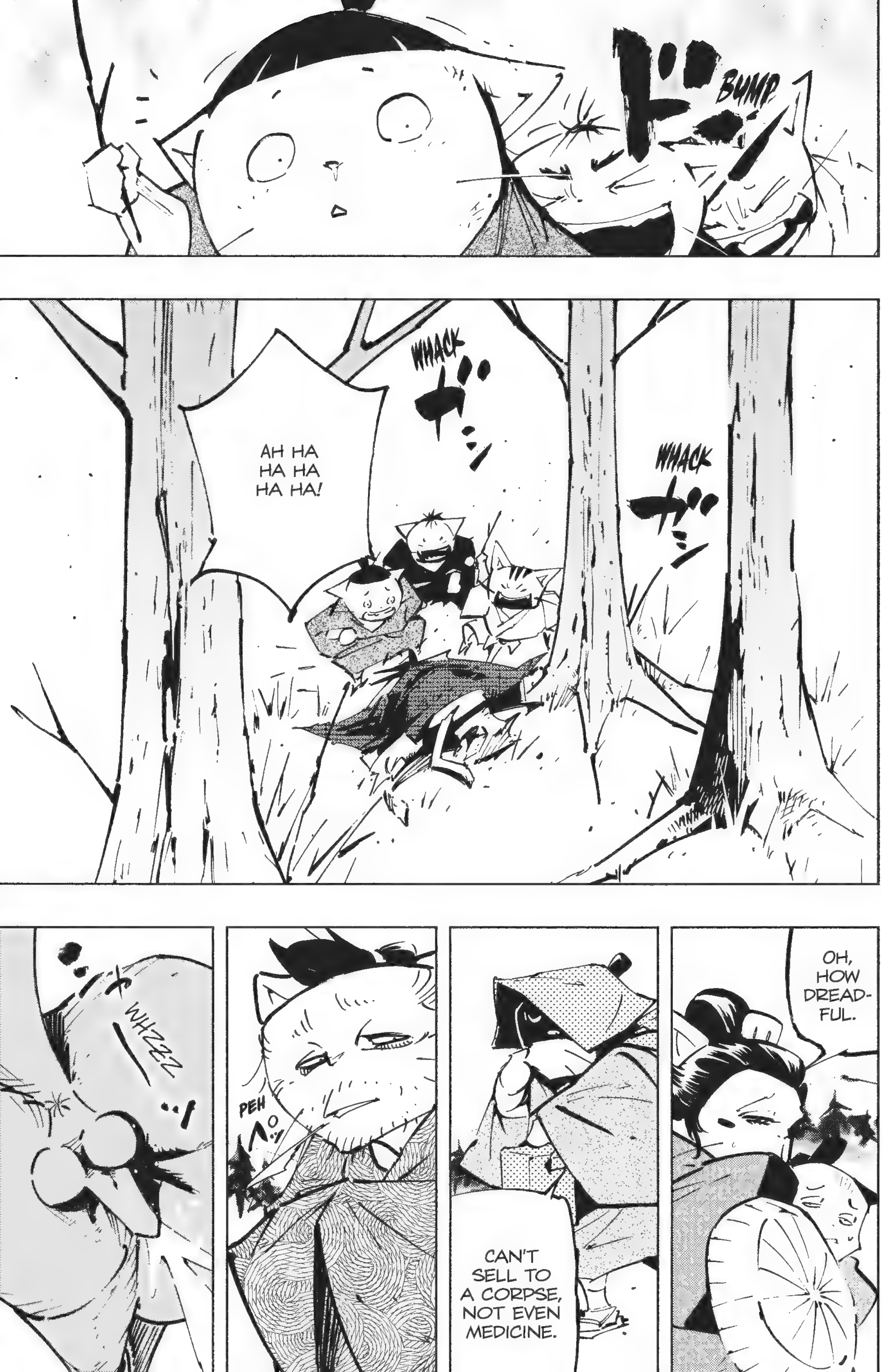
CHAPTER 5:
POMPEY SASS III

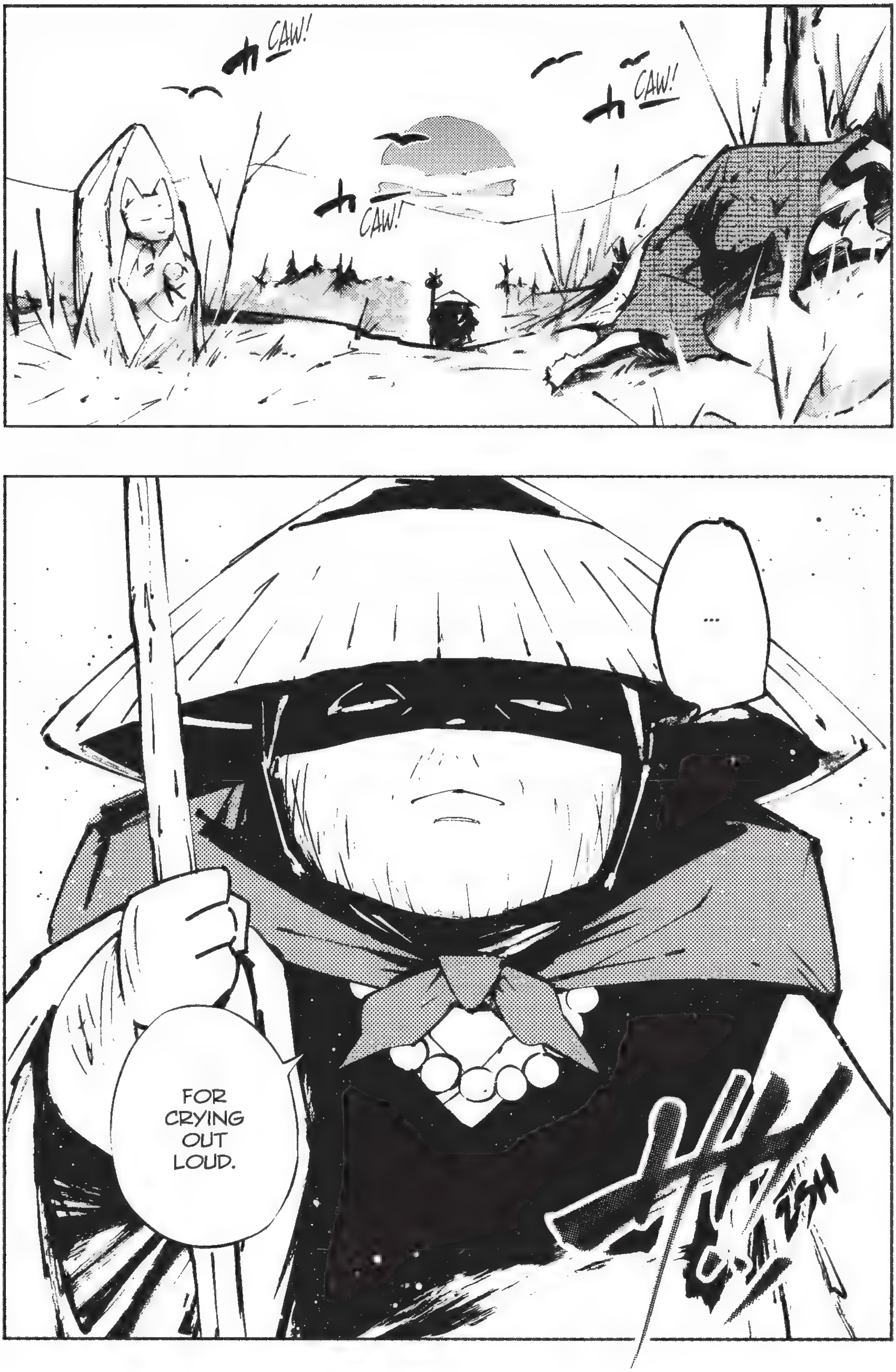
HIROYUKI
TAKEI

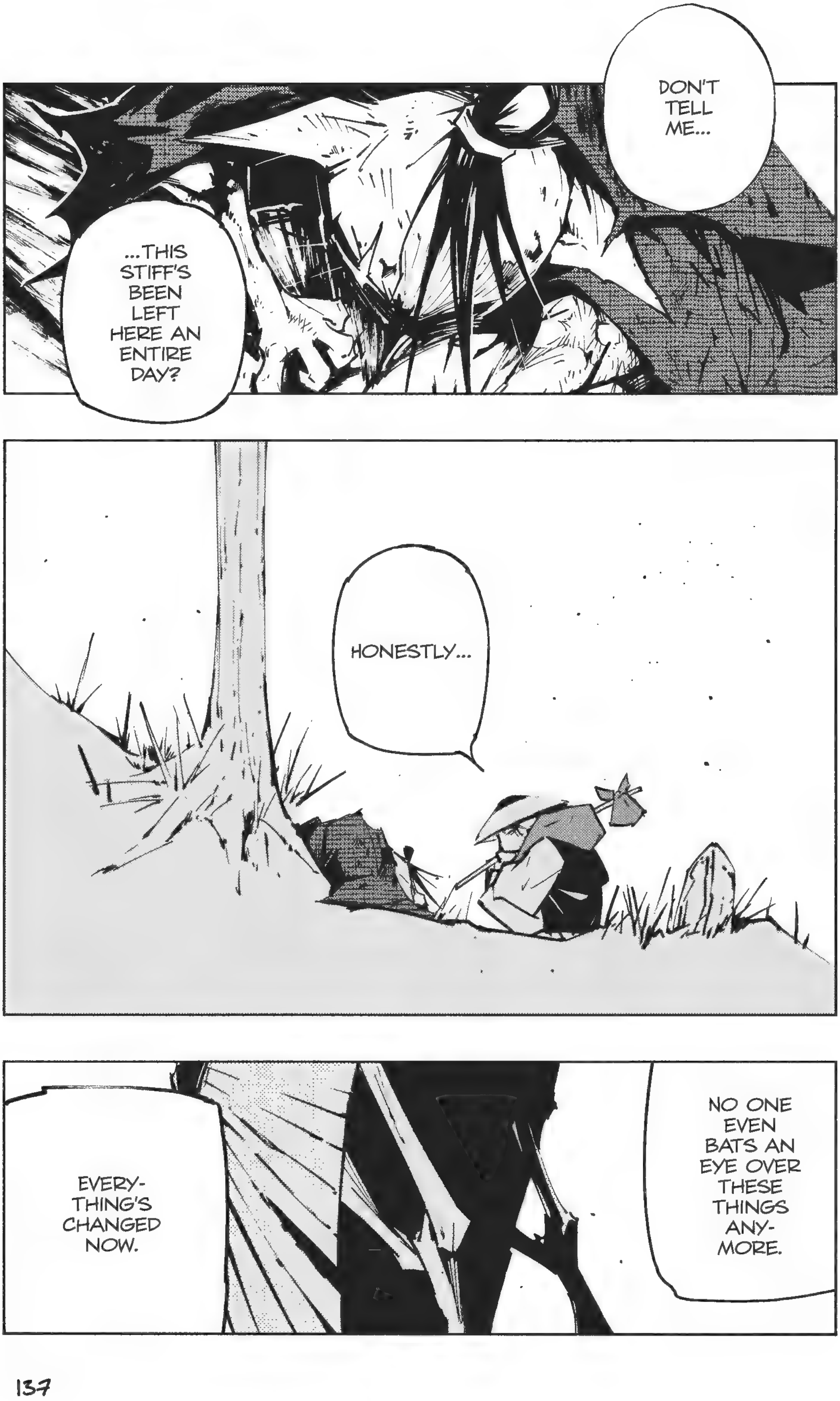

FLAP
バッ
FLAP
バッ
FLAP
バッ

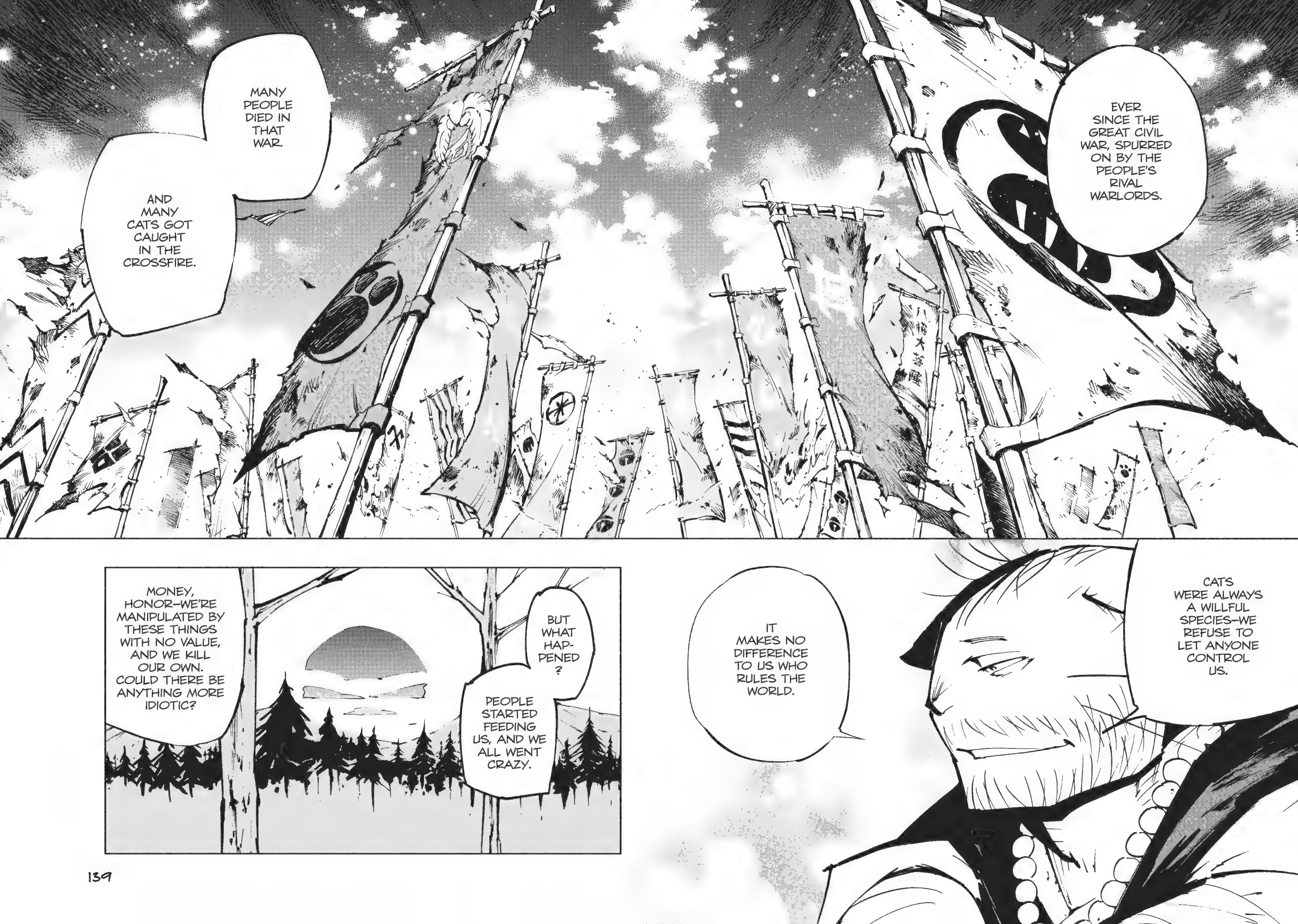

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD...
THE SAME OLD SCENE, AGAIN.

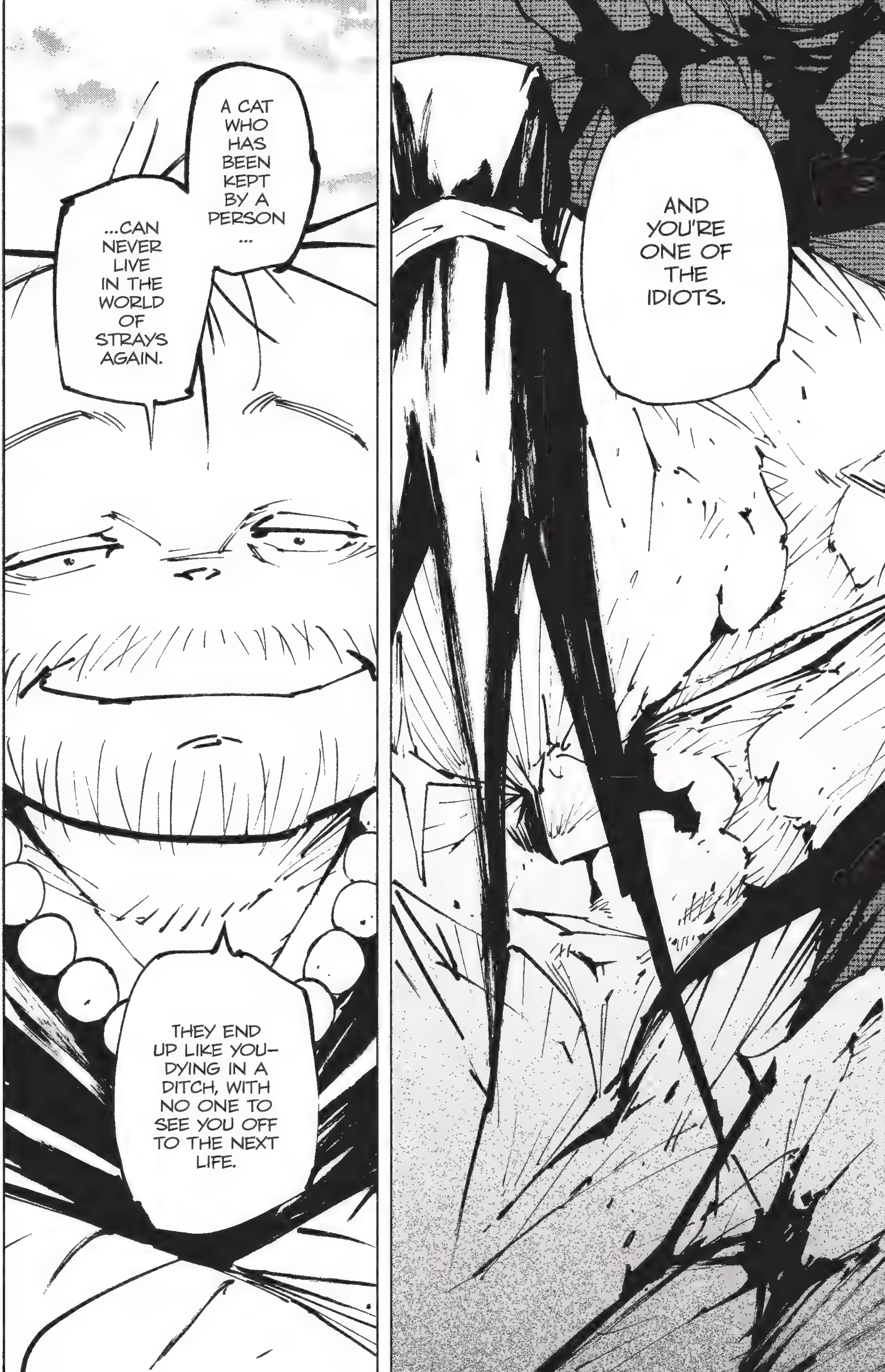

ACK!
MULBER-RIES, MULBER-RIES!
PLEASE DON'T HAUNT US.
WHZZZ...
SPLITCH
SPLITCH
WHEEE!

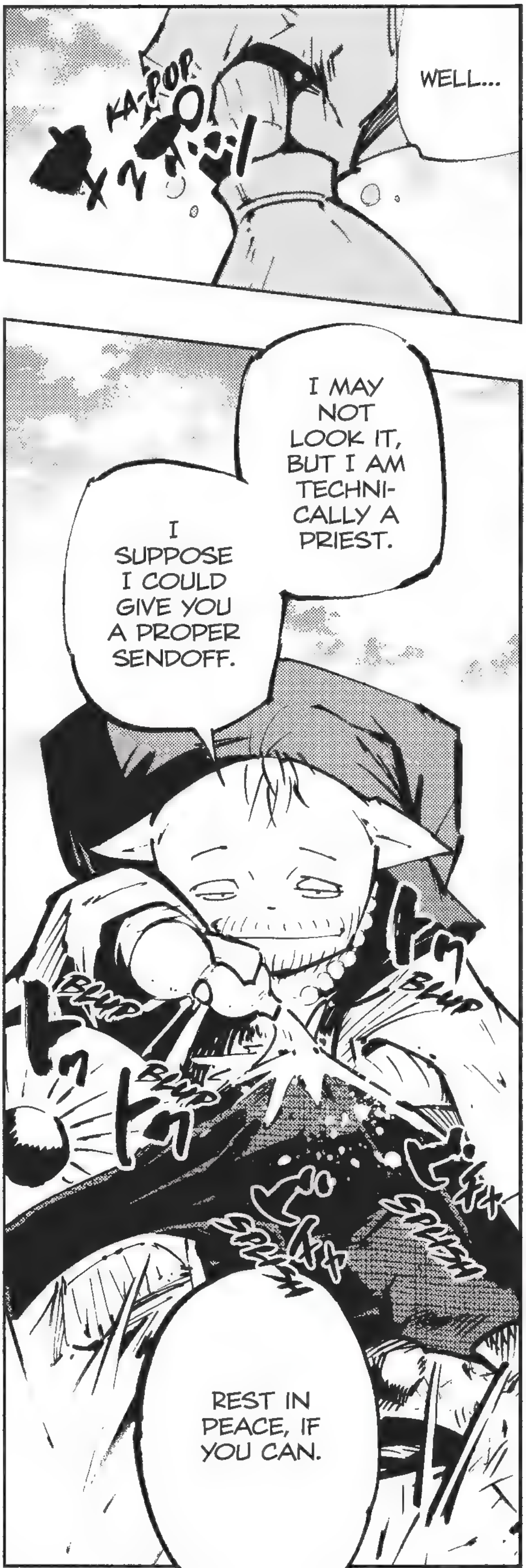

BUMP
WHACK
WHACK
AH HA HA HA HA HA!
OH, HOW DREADFUL.
CAN'T SELL TO A CORPSE, NOT EVEN MEDICINE.
PEH
WHZZZ

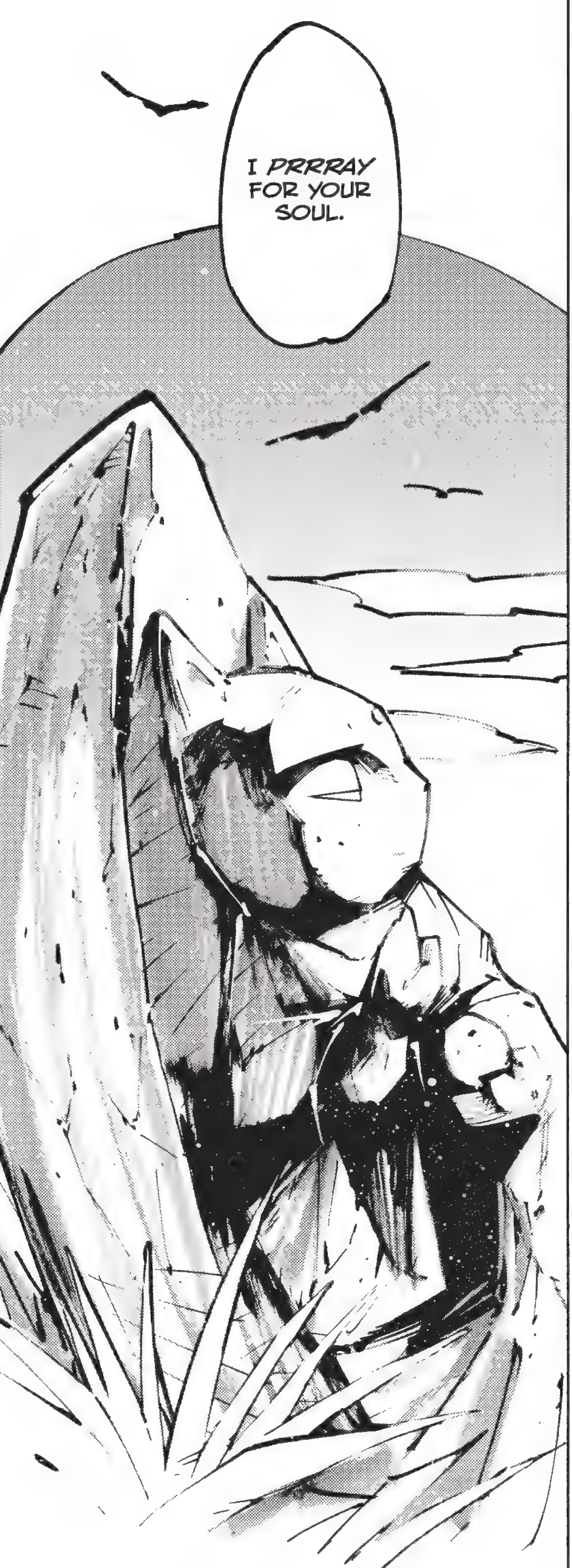

CAW!
CAW!
CAW!
...
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.
ZSH

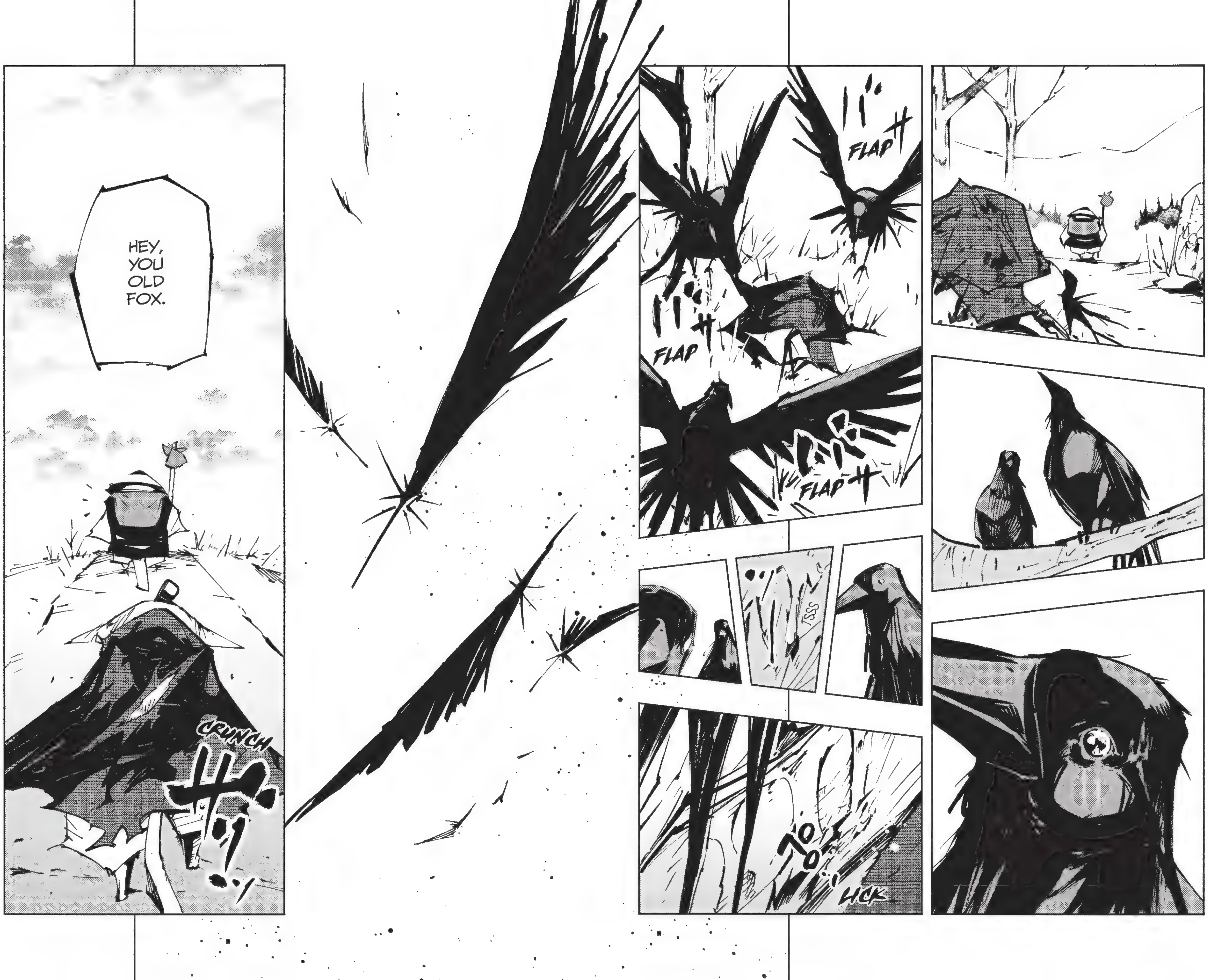

DON'T TELL ME...
...THIS STIFF'S BEEN LEFT HERE AN ENTIRE DAY?
HONESTLY...
NO ONE EVEN BATS AN EYE OVER THESE THINGS ANYMORE.
EVERYTHING'S CHANGED NOW.

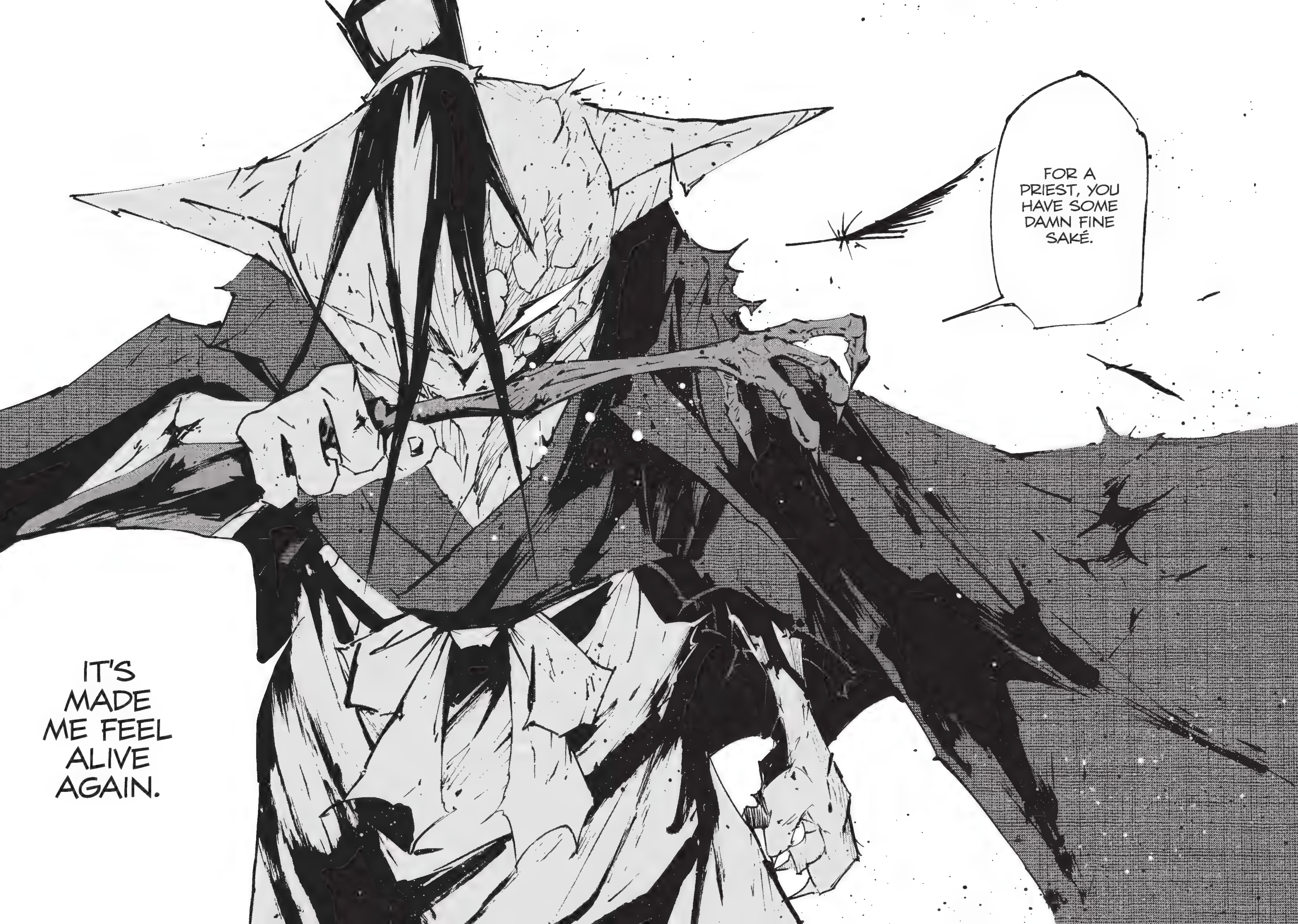

EVER SINCE THE GREAT CIVIL WAR, SPURRED ON BY THE PEOPLE'S RIVAL WARLORDS.
八幡大菩薩
MANY PEOPLE DIED IN THAT WAR.
AND MANY CATS GOT CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE.
CATS WERE ALWAYS A WILLFUL SPECIES—WE REFUSE TO LET ANYONE CONTROL US.
IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO US WHO RULES THE WORLD.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED?
PEOPLE STARTED FEEDING US, AND WE ALL WENT CRAZY.
MONEY, HONOR—WE'RE MANIPULATED BY THESE THINGS WITH NO VALUE, AND WE KILL OUR OWN. COULD THERE BE ANYTHING MORE IDIOTIC?

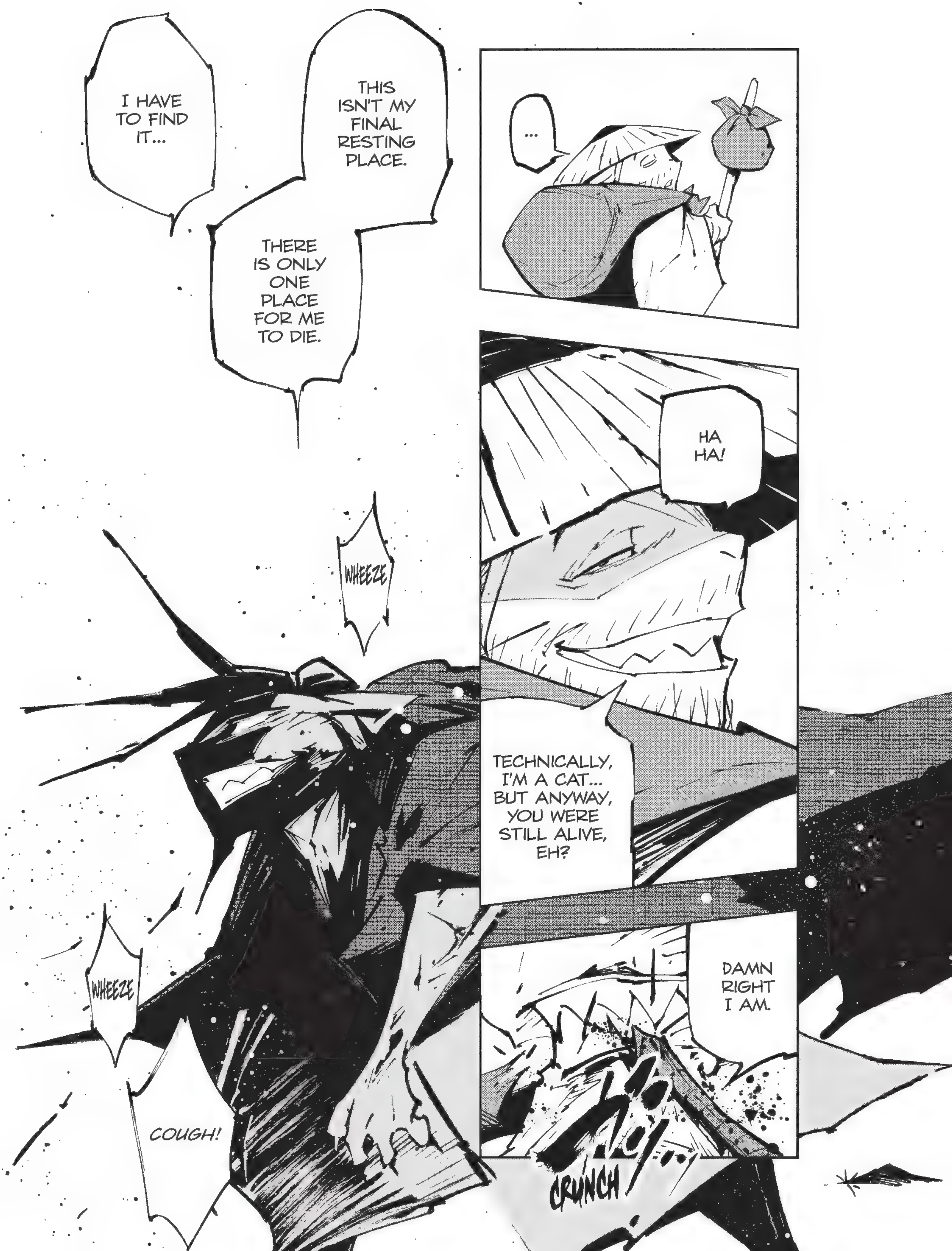

AND YOU'RE ONE OF THE IDIOTS.
A CAT WHO HAS BEEN KEPT BY A PERSON...
...CAN NEVER LIVE IN THE WORLD OF STRAYS AGAIN.
THEY END UP LIKE YOU—DYING IN A DITCH, WITH NO ONE TO SEE YOU OFF TO THE NEXT LIFE.

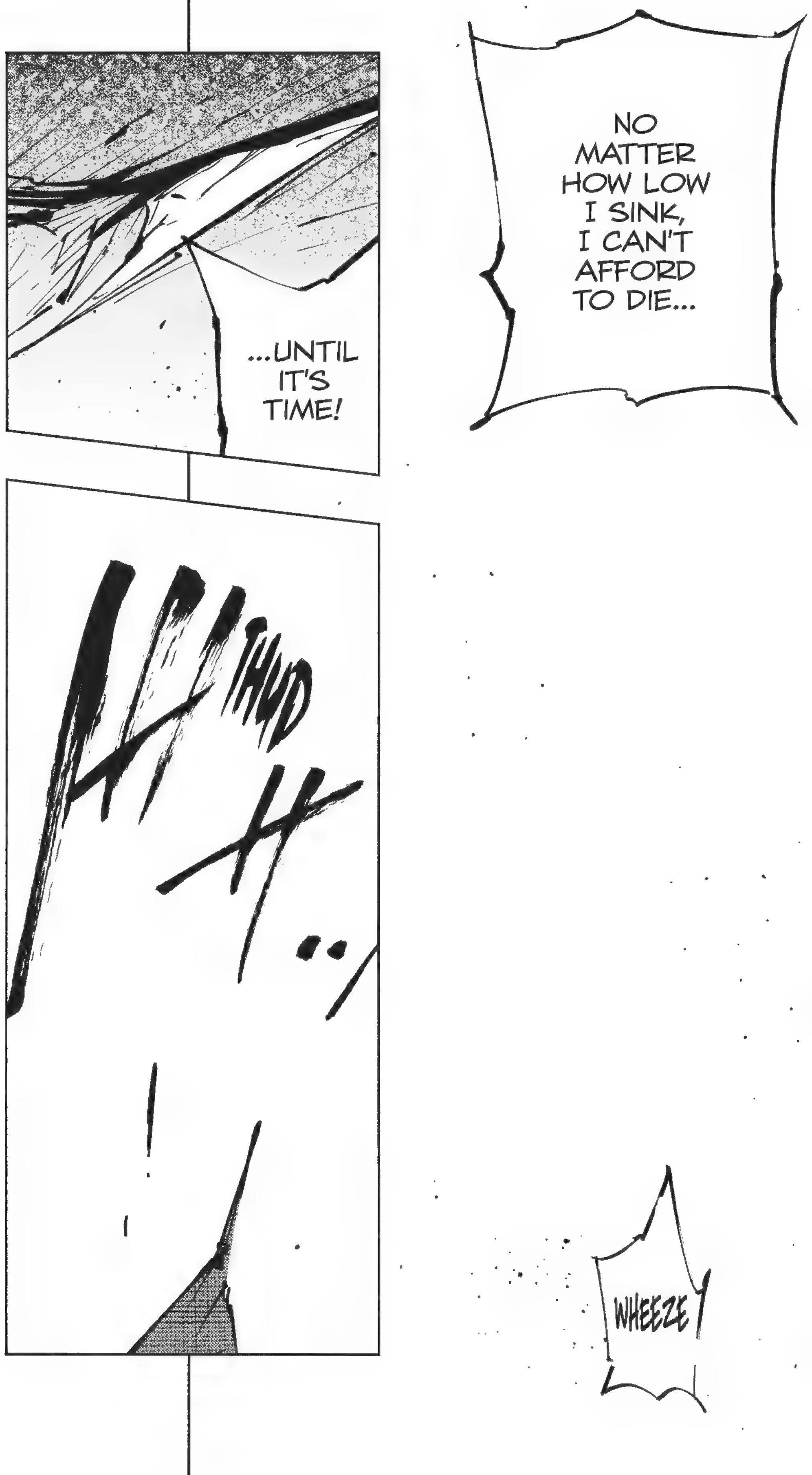

WELL...
KA-POP
I MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I AM TECHNICALLY A PRIEST.
I SUPPOSE I COULD GIVE YOU A PROPER SENDOFF.
BLUP
BLUP
BLUP
SPLISH
SPLISH
REST IN PEACE, IF YOU CAN.

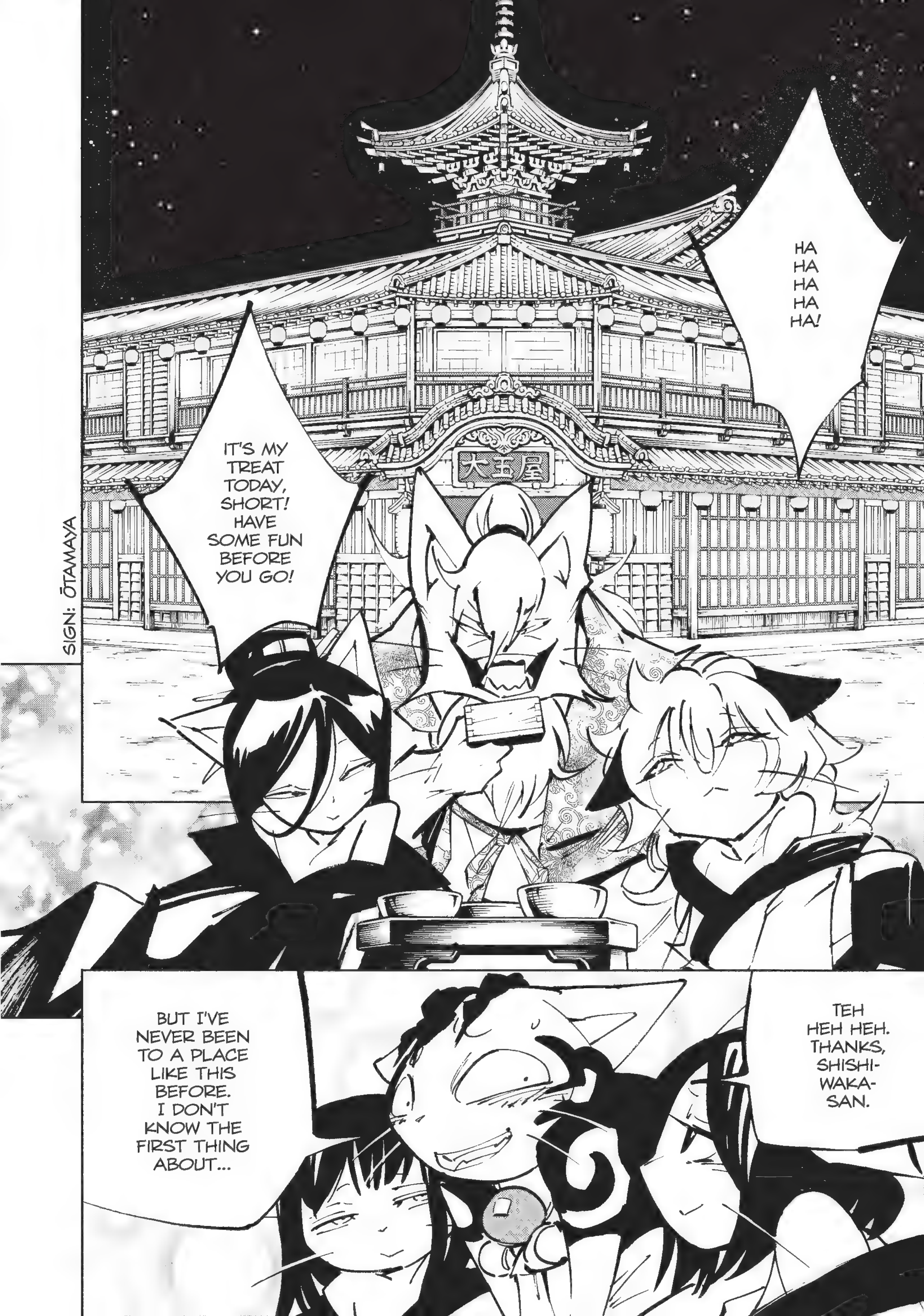

I *PRRRAY* FOR YOUR SOUL.

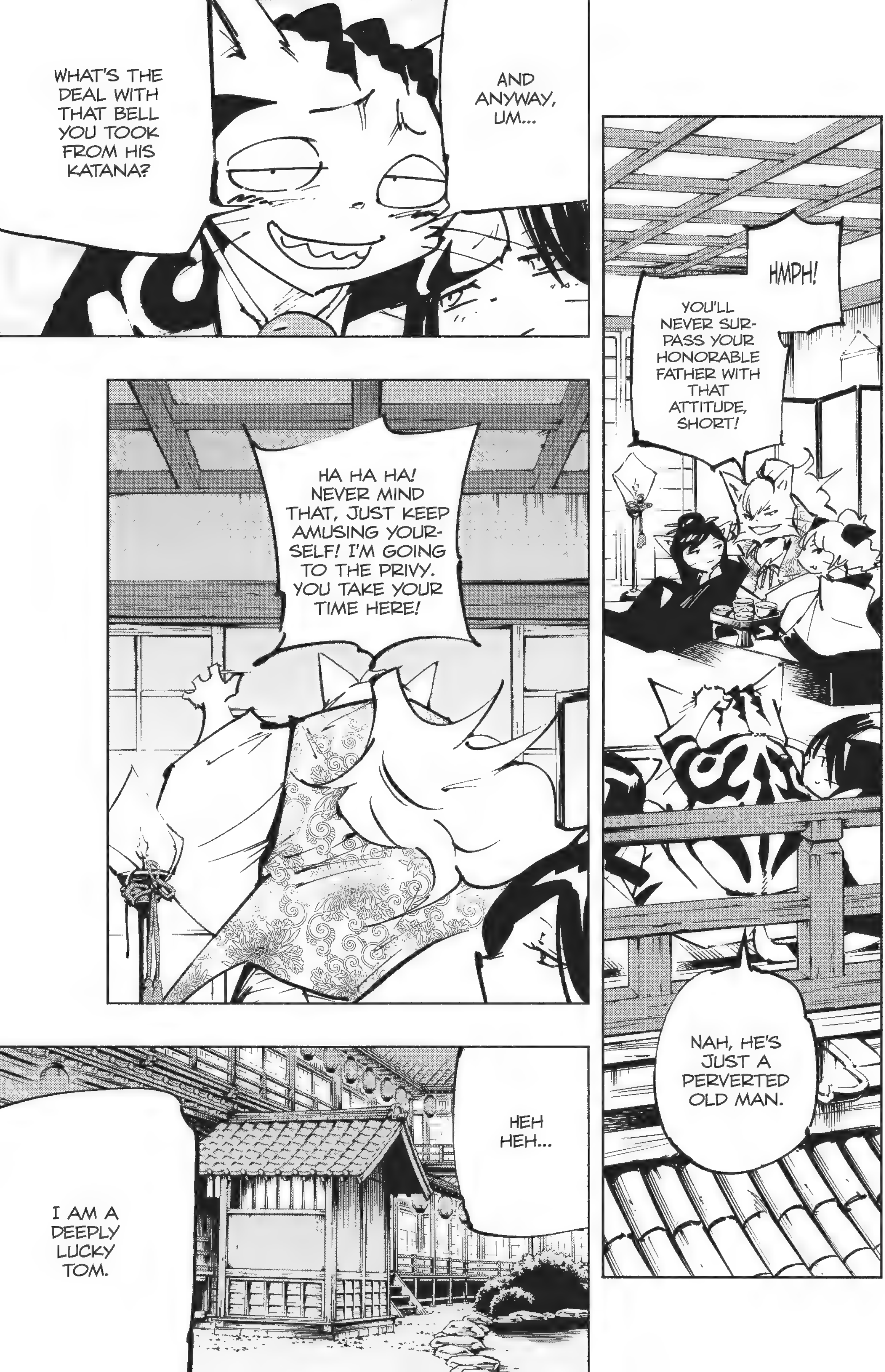

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
TSSS
LICK
HEY, YOU OLD FOX.
CRUNCH

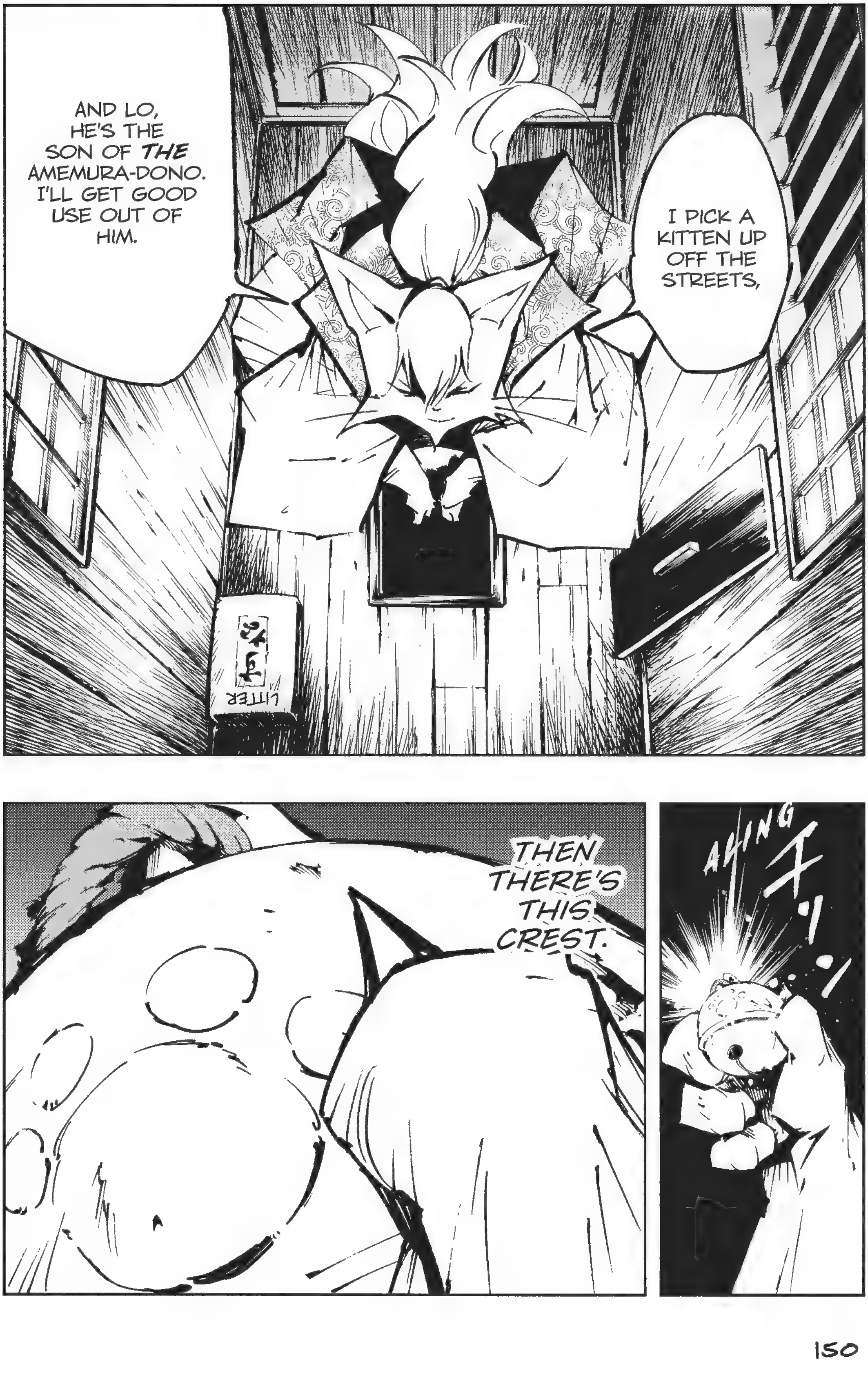

FOR A PRIEST, YOU HAVE SOME DAMN FINE SAKÉ.
IT'S MADE ME FEEL ALIVE AGAIN.

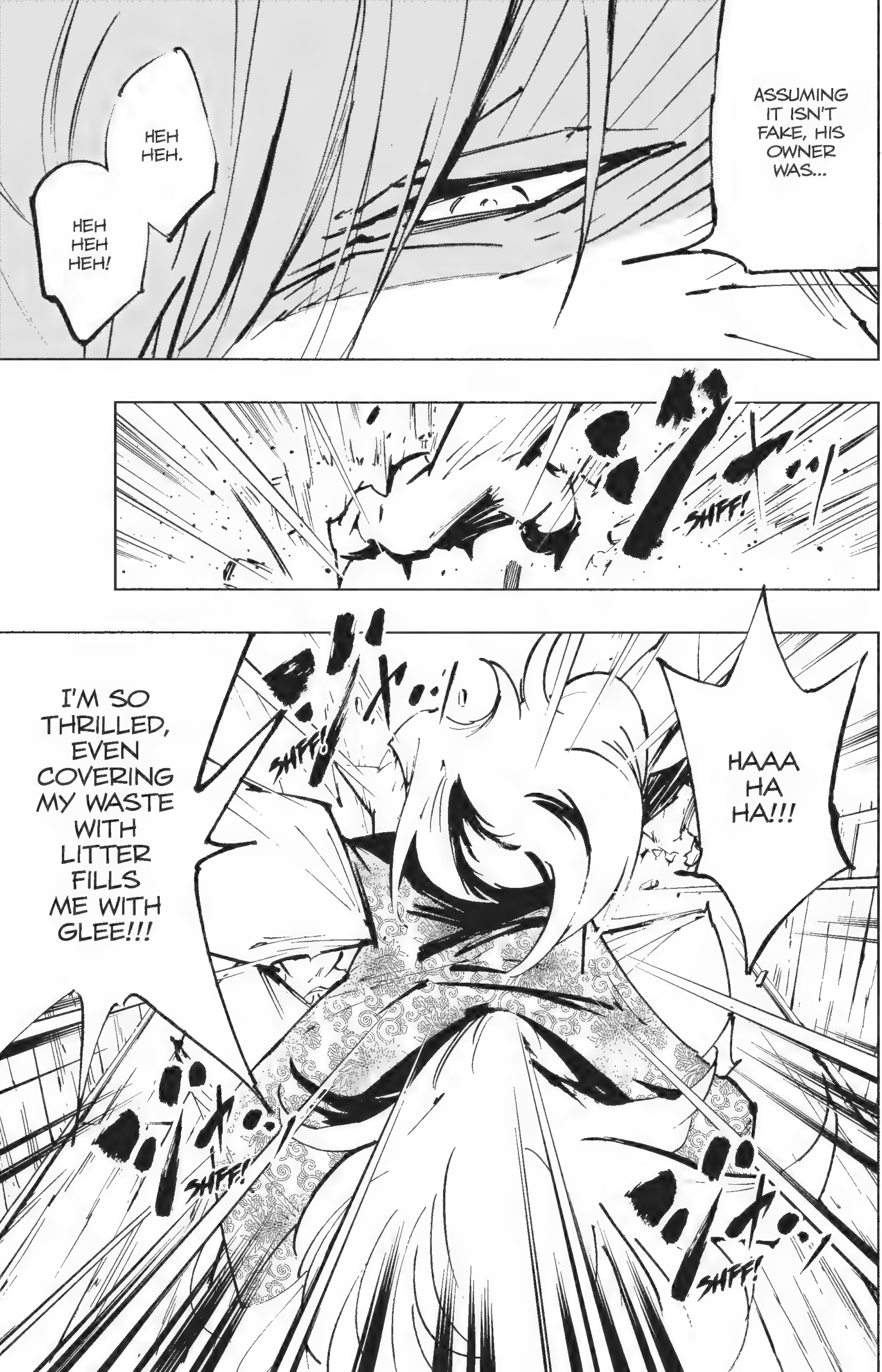

...
THIS ISN'T MY FINAL RESTING PLACE.
I HAVE TO FIND IT...
THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE FOR ME TO DIE.
HA HA!
WHEEZE
TECHNICALLY, I'M A CAT... BUT ANYWAY, YOU WERE STILL ALIVE, EH?
DAMN RIGHT I AM.
CRUNCH
WHEEZE
COUGH!

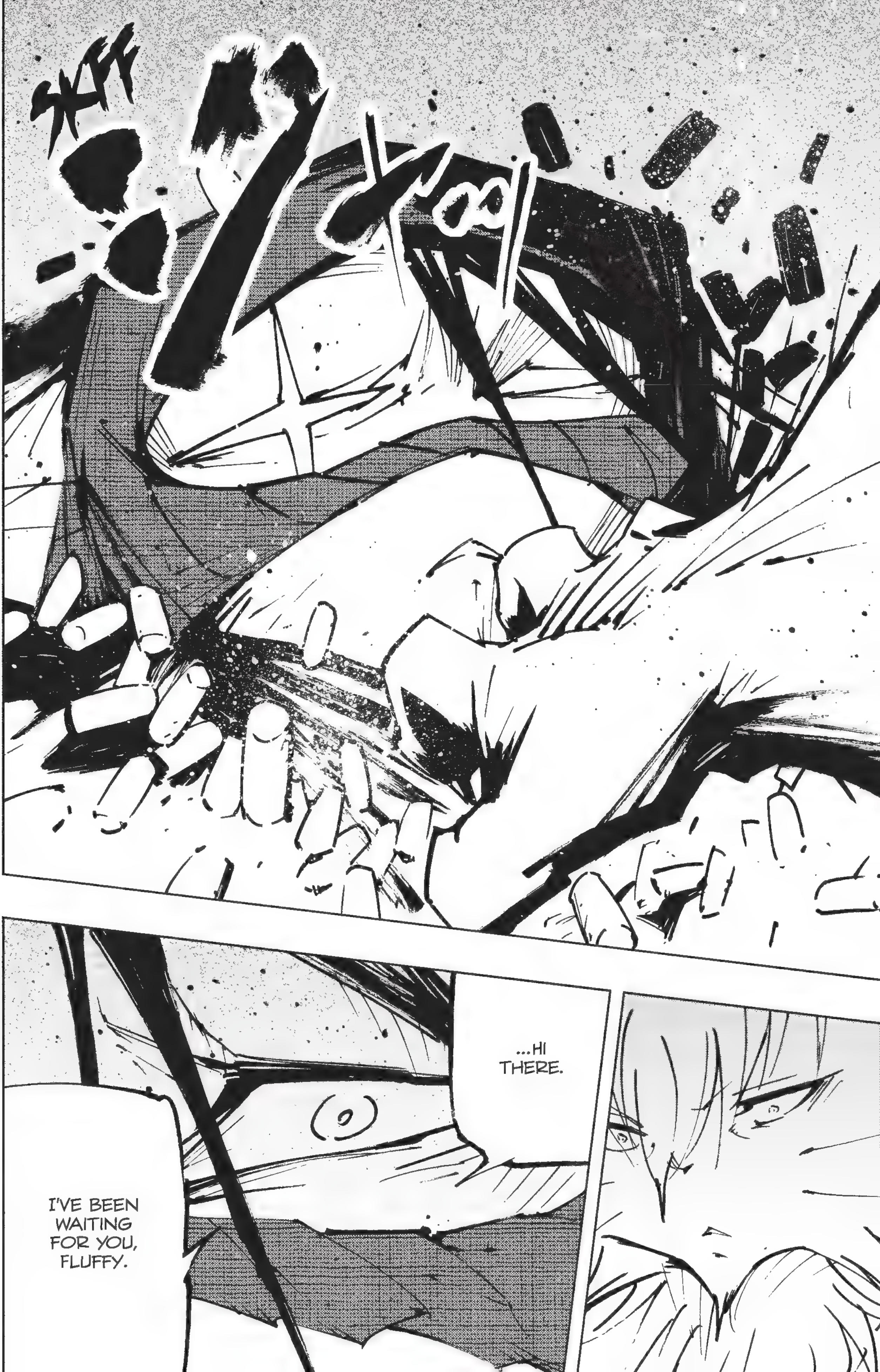

NO MATTER HOW LOW I SINK, I CAN'T AFFORD TO DIE...
...UNTIL IT'S TIME!
THUD
WHEEZE

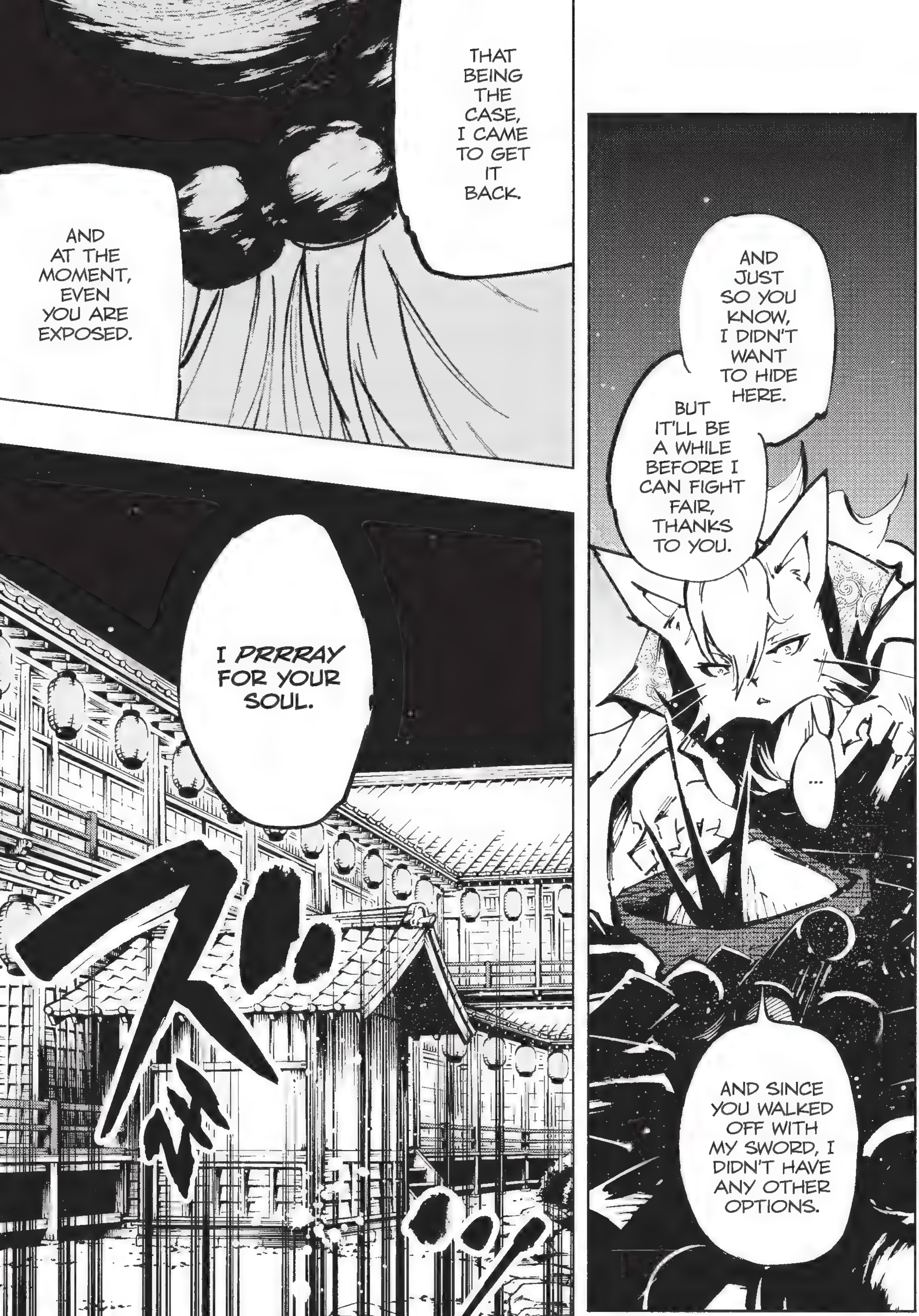

HA HA HA HA HA!
大玉屋
SIGN: ŌTAMAYA
IT'S MY TREAT TODAY, SHORT! HAVE SOME FUN BEFORE YOU GO!
TEH HEH HEH. THANKS, SHISHIWAKA-SAN.
BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN TO A PLACE LIKE THIS BEFORE. I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT...


AND ANYWAY, UM...
WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THAT BELL YOU TOOK FROM HIS KATANA?
HMPH!
YOU'LL NEVER SURPASS YOUR HONORABLE FATHER WITH THAT ATTITUDE, SHORT!
HA HA HA! NEVER MIND THAT, JUST KEEP AMUSING YOURSELF! I'M GOING TO THE PRIVY. YOU TAKE YOUR TIME HERE!
NAH, HE'S JUST A PERVERTED OLD MAN.
HEH HEH...
I AM A DEEPLY LUCKY TOM.


I PICK A KITTEN UP OFF THE STREETS,
AND LO, HE'S THE SON OF ***THE*** AMEMURA-DONO. I'LL GET GOOD USE OUT OF HIM.
LITTER
AKING
THEN THERE'S THIS CREST.


ASSUMING IT ISN'T FAKE, HIS OWNER WAS...
HEH HEH.
HEH HEH HEH!
SHFF!
HAAA HA HA!!!
I'M SO THRILLED, EVEN COVERING MY WASTE WITH LITTER FILLS ME WITH GLEE!!!
SHFF!
SHFF!
SHFF!

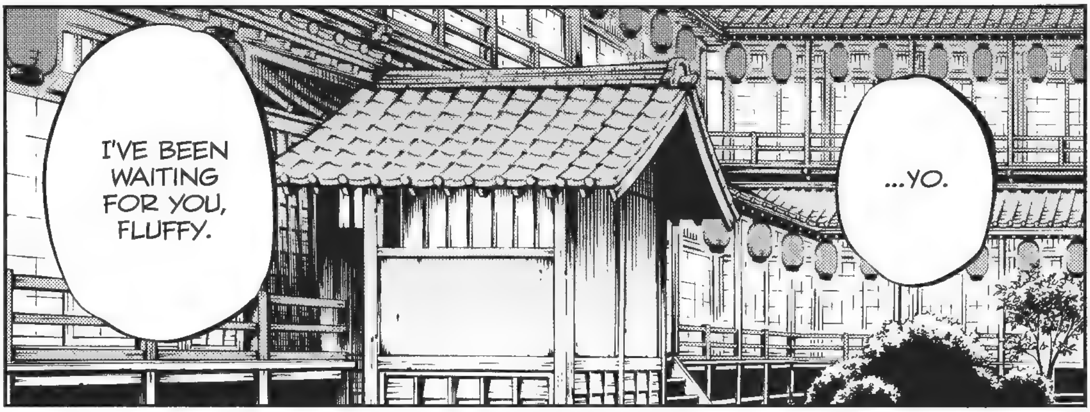

SKFF
...HI THERE.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, FLUFFY.

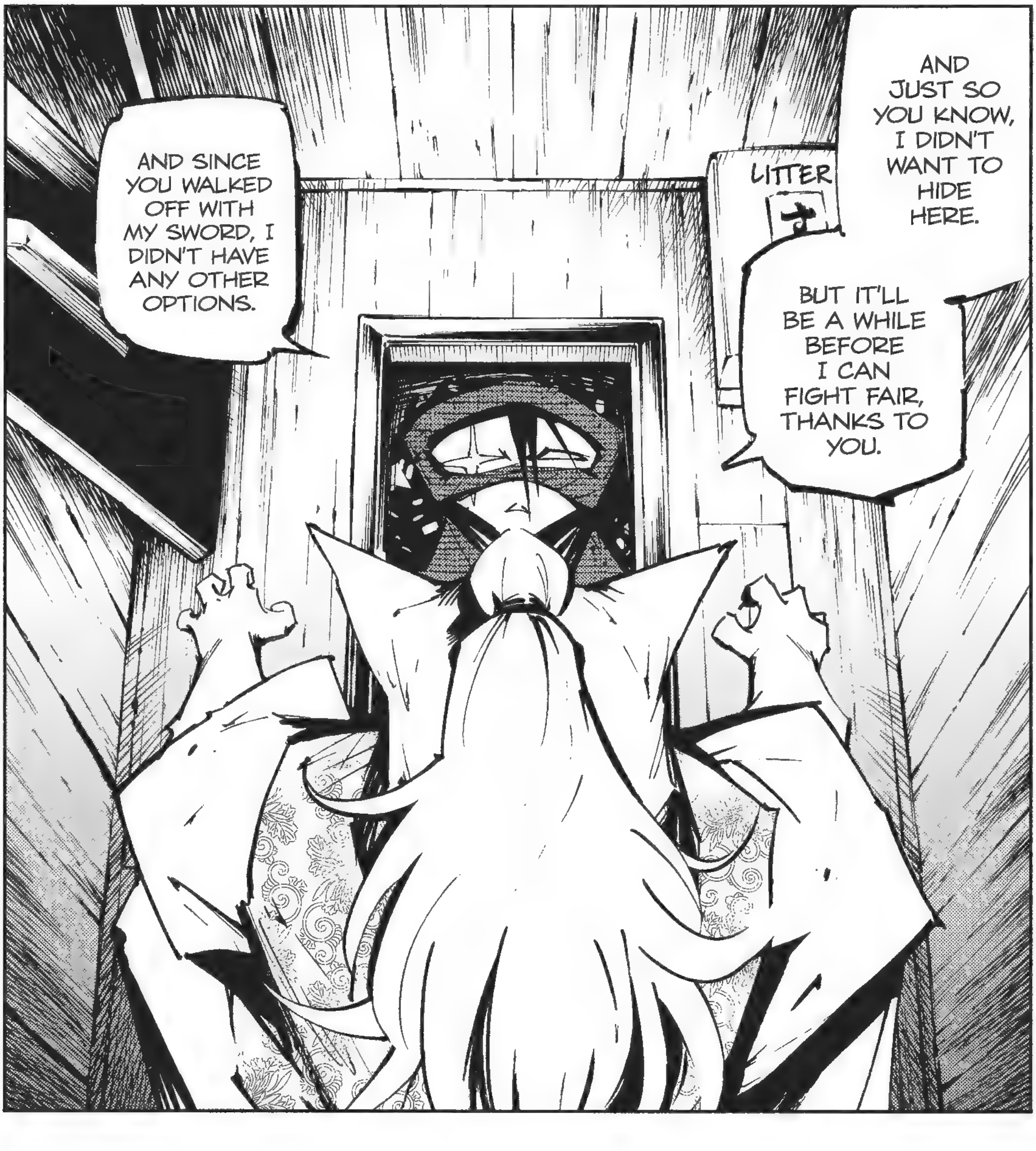

THAT BEING THE CASE, I CAME TO GET IT BACK.
AND AT THE MOMENT, EVEN YOU ARE EXPOSED.
AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T WANT TO HIDE HERE.
BUT IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I CAN FIGHT FAIR, THANKS TO YOU.
...
AND SINCE YOU WALKED OFF WITH MY SWORD, I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS.
I *PRRRAY* FOR YOUR SOUL.

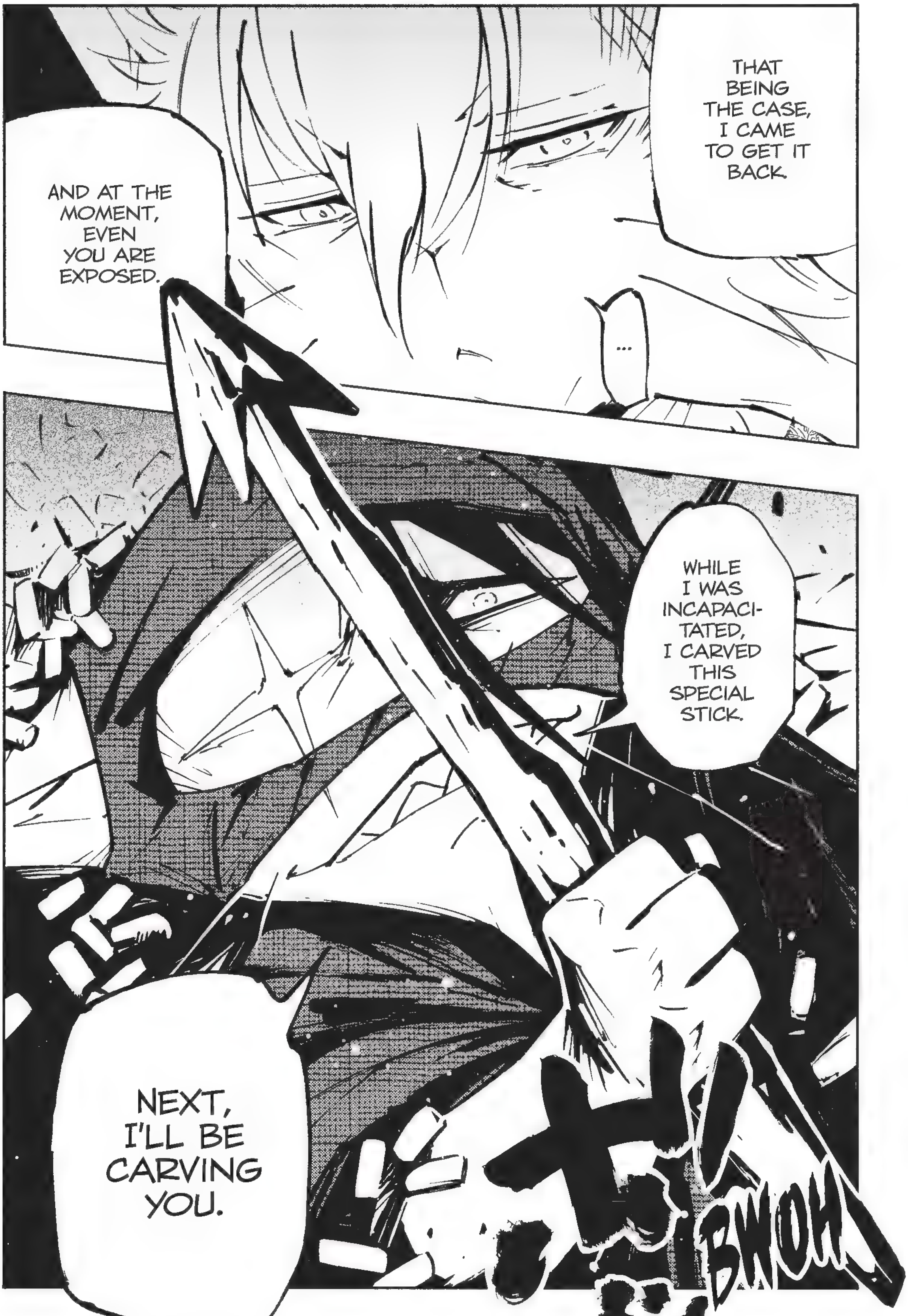
猫ヶ原

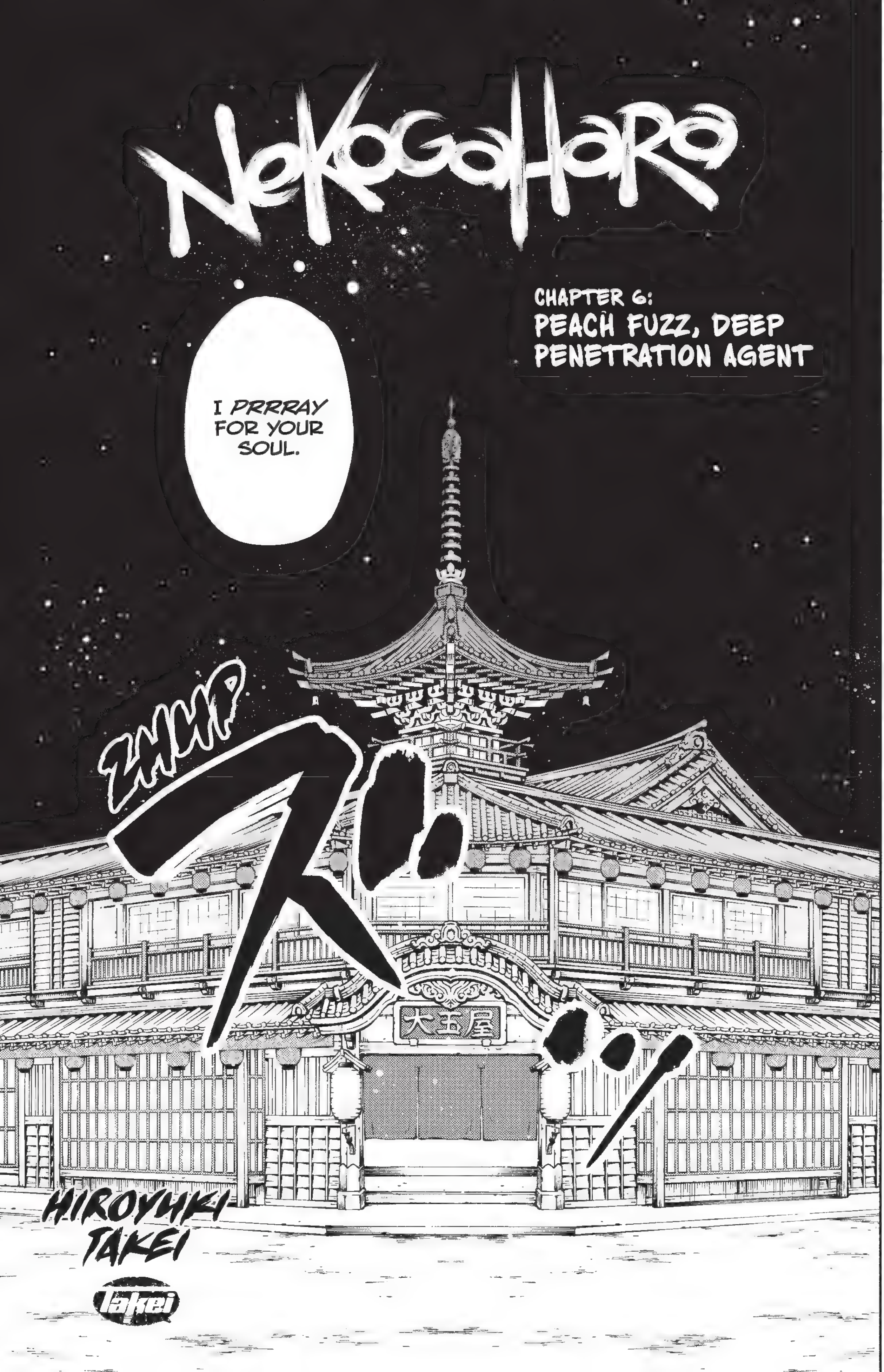
NeKoGaHaRa

ネコガハラ


...YO.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, FLUFFY.


AND JUST SO YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T WANT TO HIDE HERE.
LITTER
BUT IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I CAN FIGHT FAIR, THANKS TO YOU.
AND SINCE YOU WALKED OFF WITH MY SWORD, I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS.


THAT BEING THE CASE, I CAME TO GET IT BACK.
AND AT THE MOMENT, EVEN YOU ARE EXPOSED.
...
WHILE I WAS INCAPACITATED, I CARVED THIS SPECIAL STICK.
NEXT, I'LL BE CARVING YOU.
BWOH

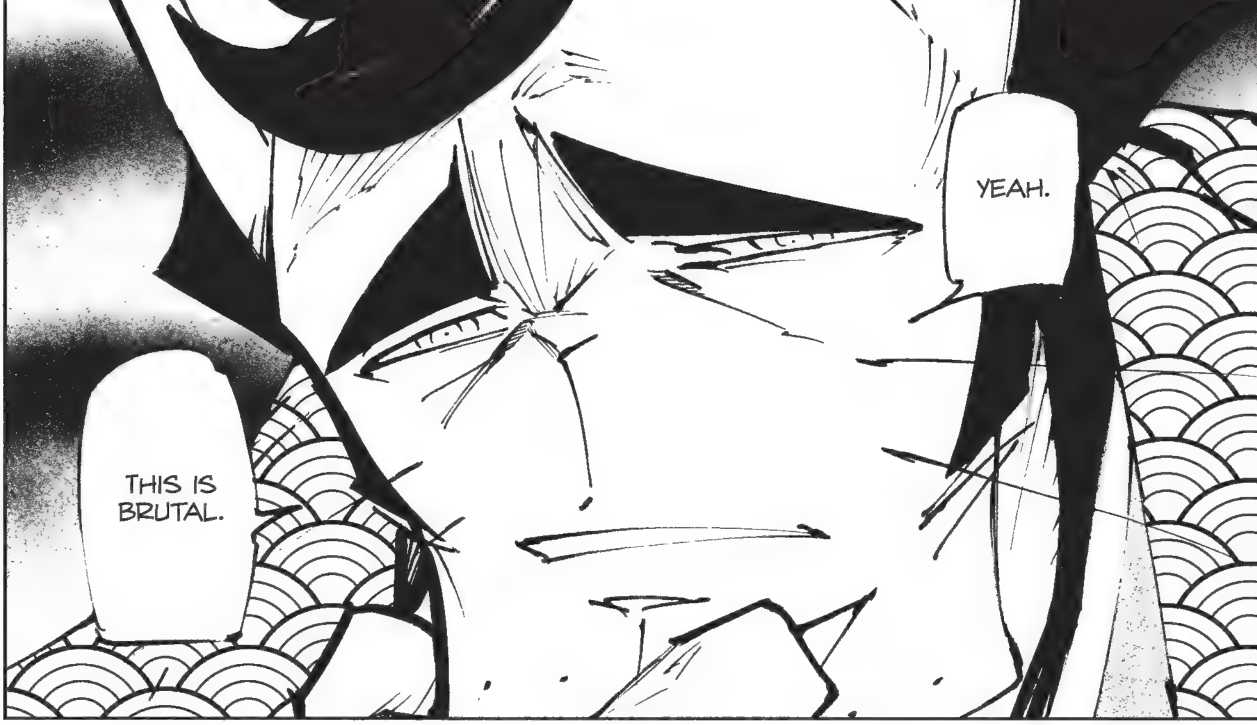


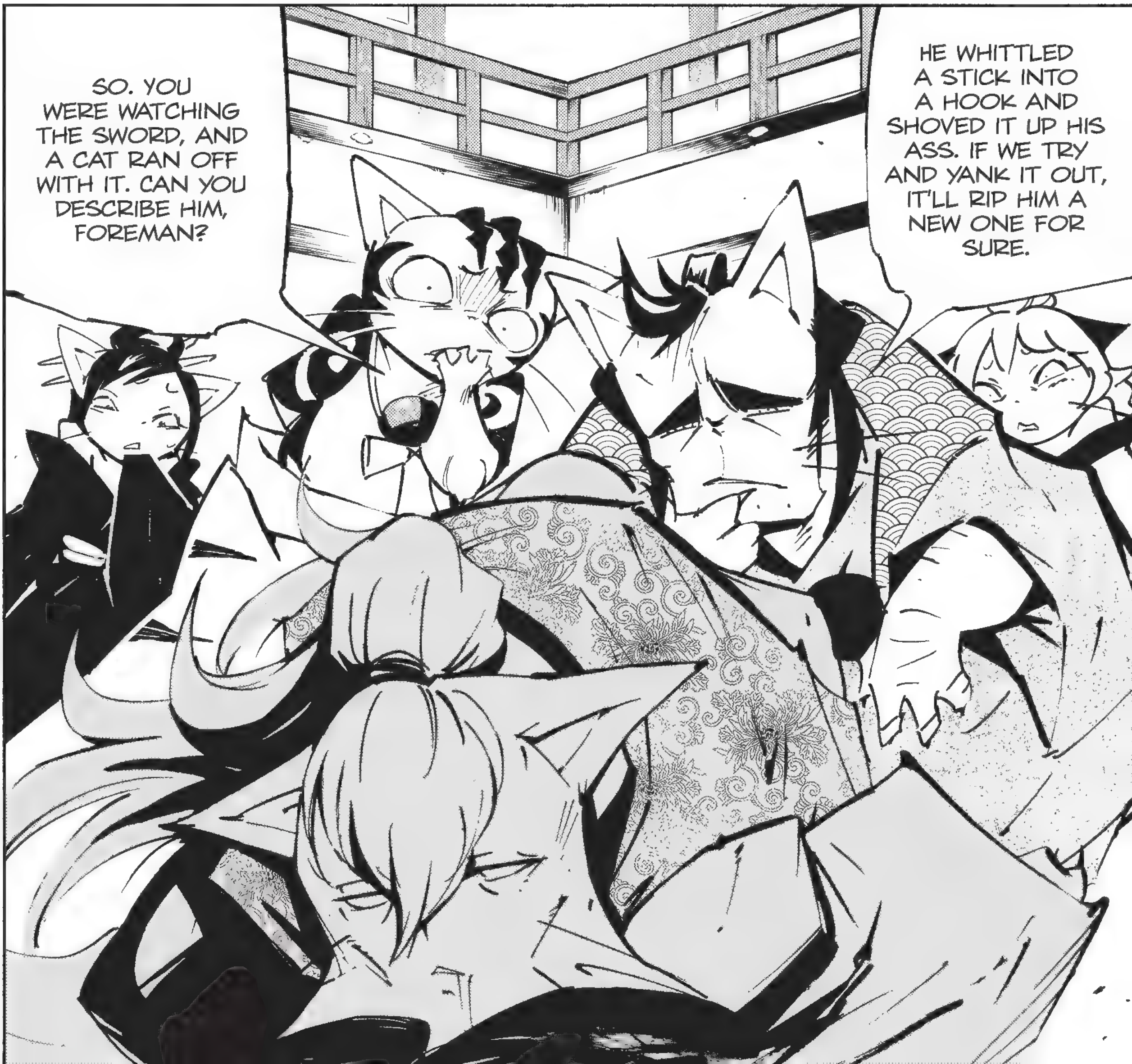
NEKOGAHARA

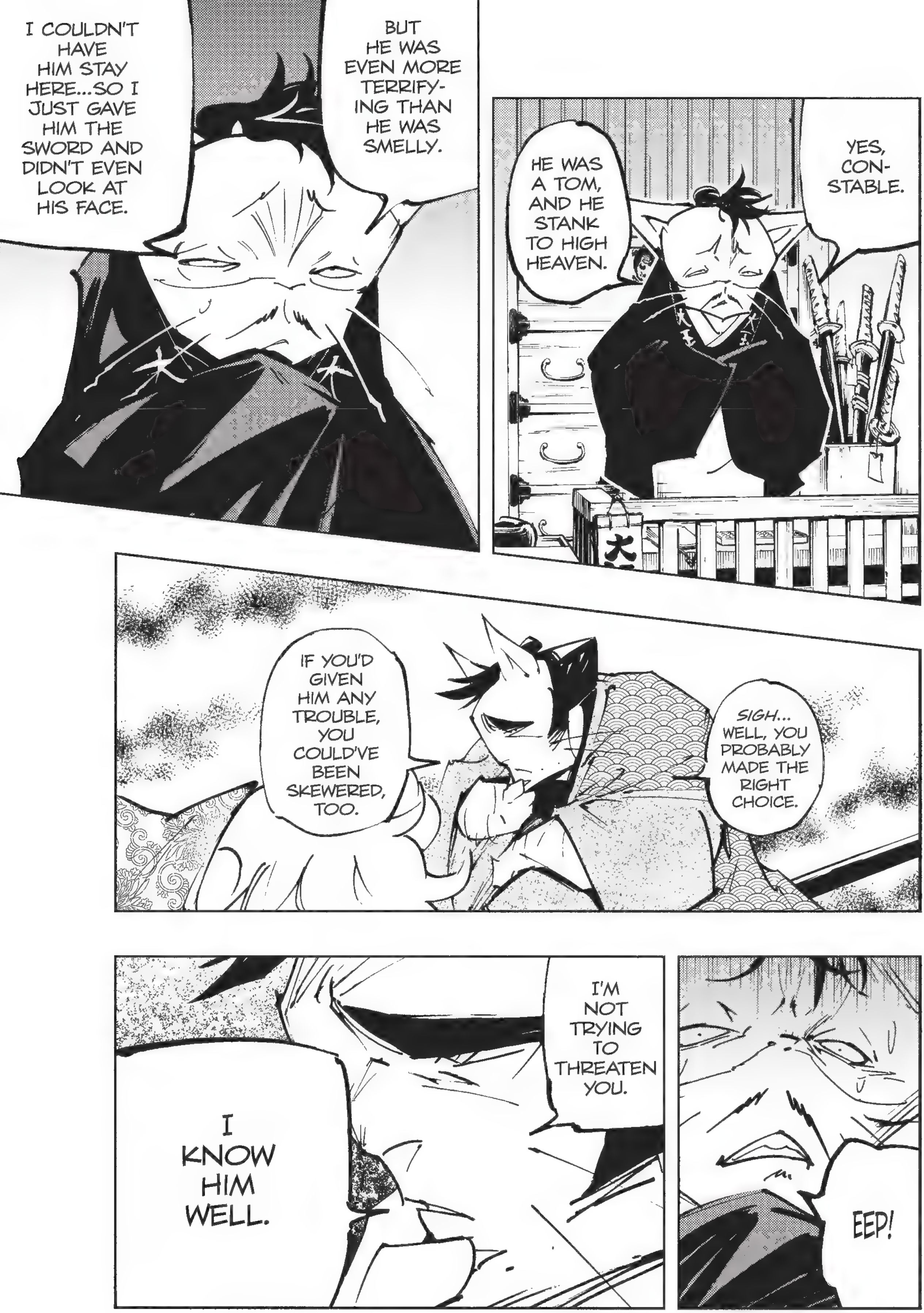
CHAPTER 6:
PEACH FUZZ, DEEP PENETRATION AGENT

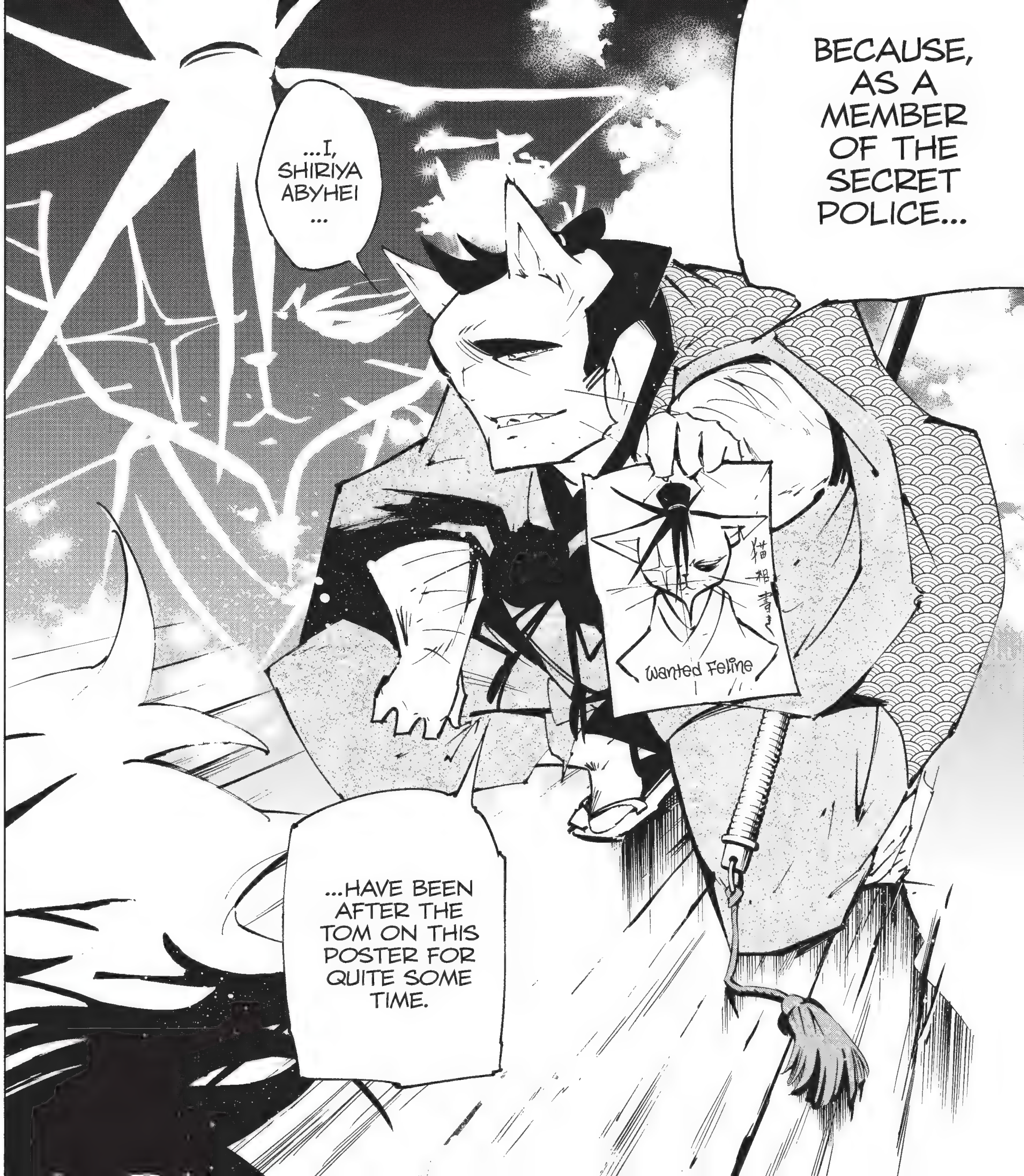
I *PRRRAY* FOR YOUR SOUL.
ZHUP
大玉屋
HIROYUKI TAKEI
Takei

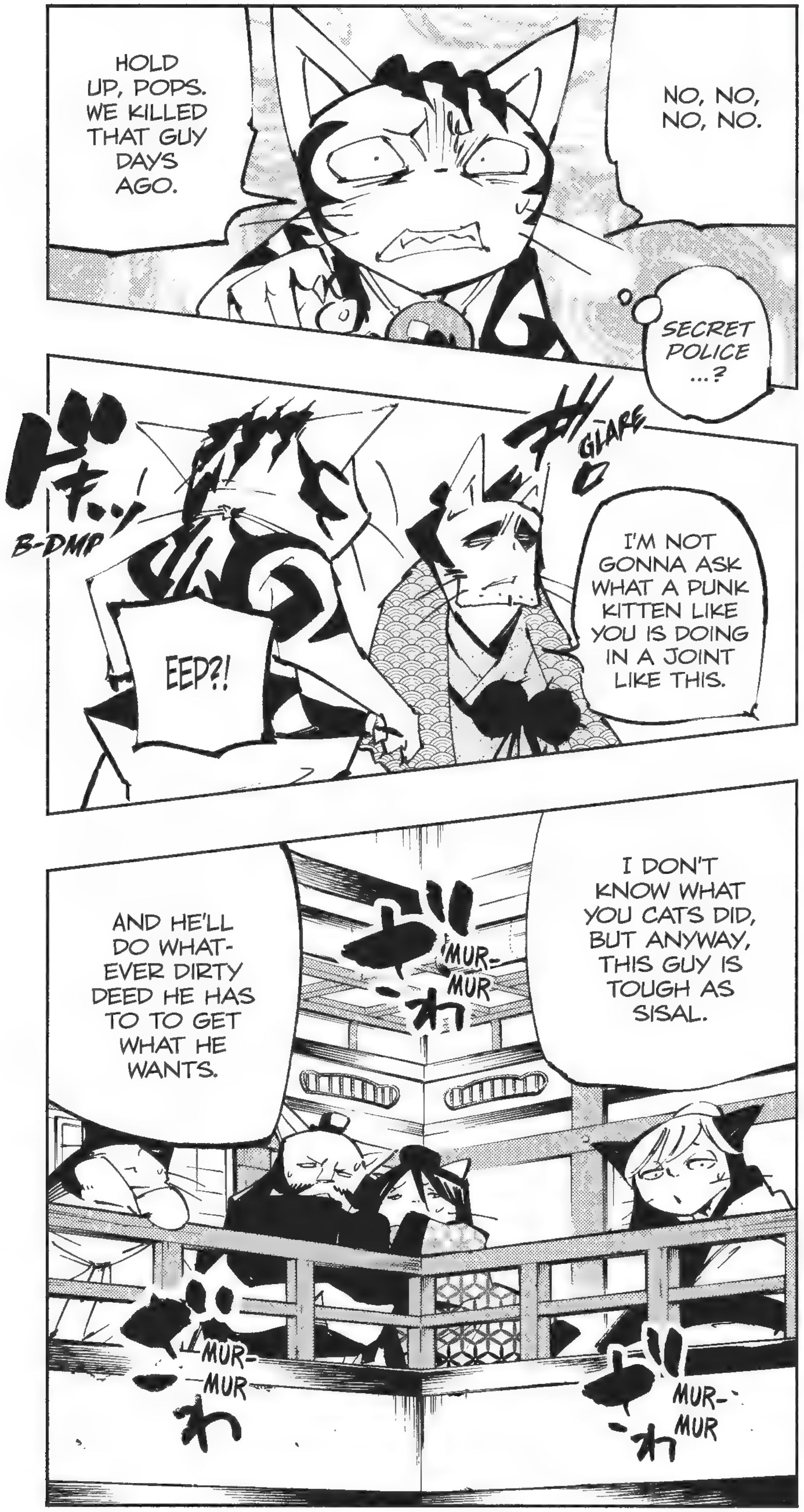
SIGN: ŌTAMAYA

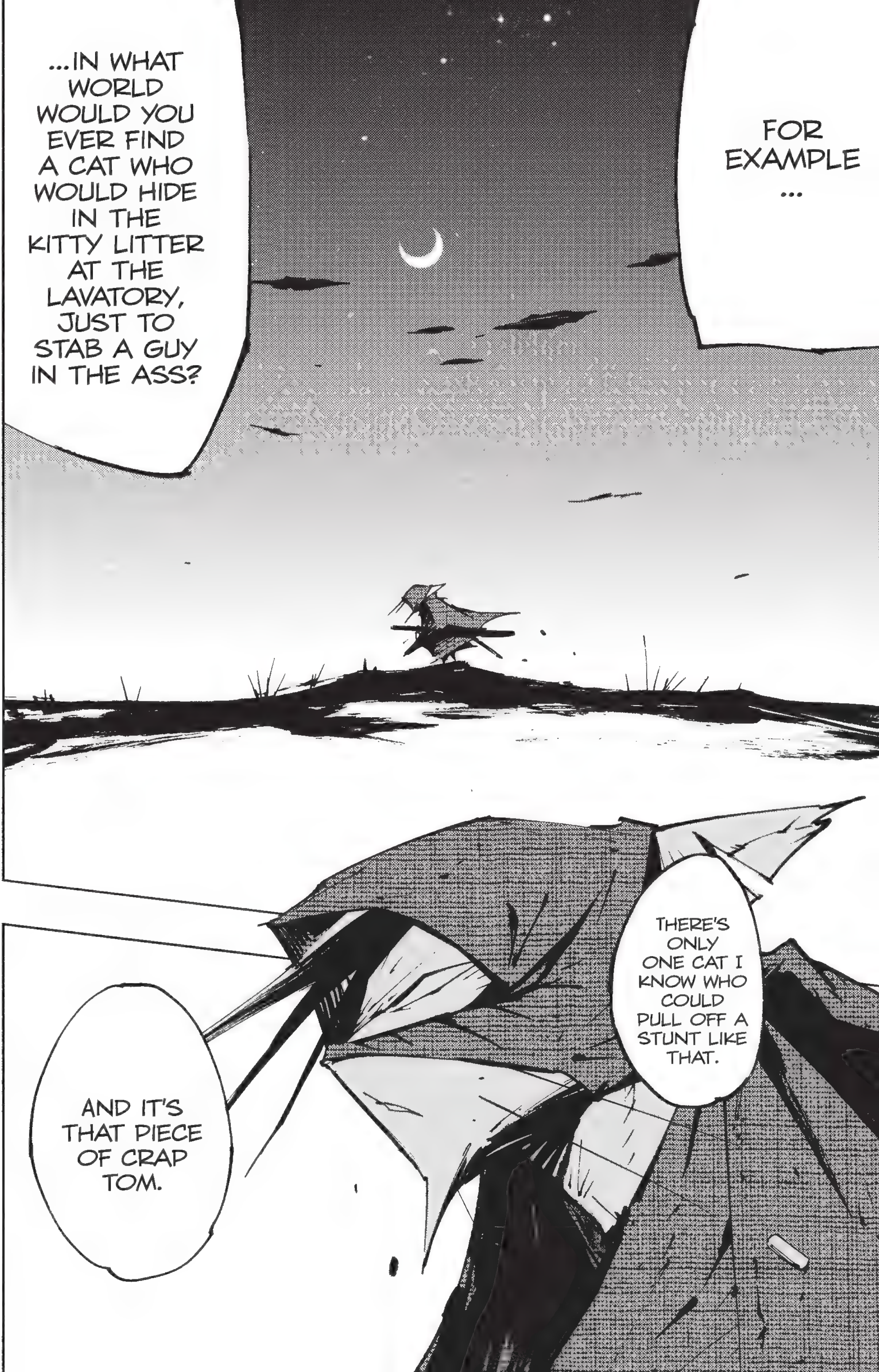

YEAH.
THIS IS BRUTAL.

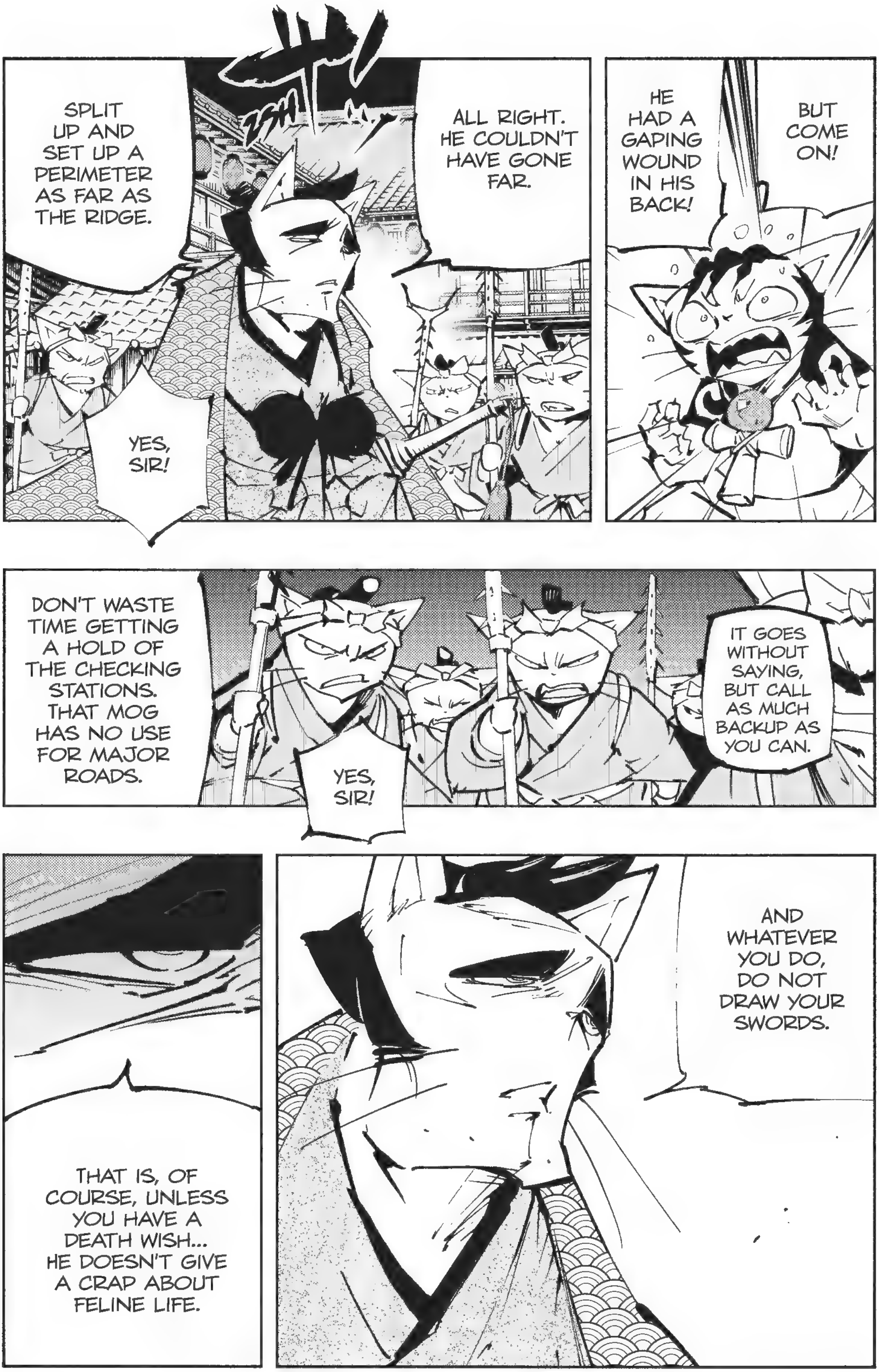

HE WHITTLED A STICK INTO A HOOK AND SHOVED IT UP HIS ASS. IF WE TRY AND YANK IT OUT, IT'LL RIP HIM A NEW ONE FOR SURE.
SO. YOU WERE WATCHING THE SWORD, AND A CAT RAN OFF WITH IT. CAN YOU DESCRIBE HIM, FOREMAN?

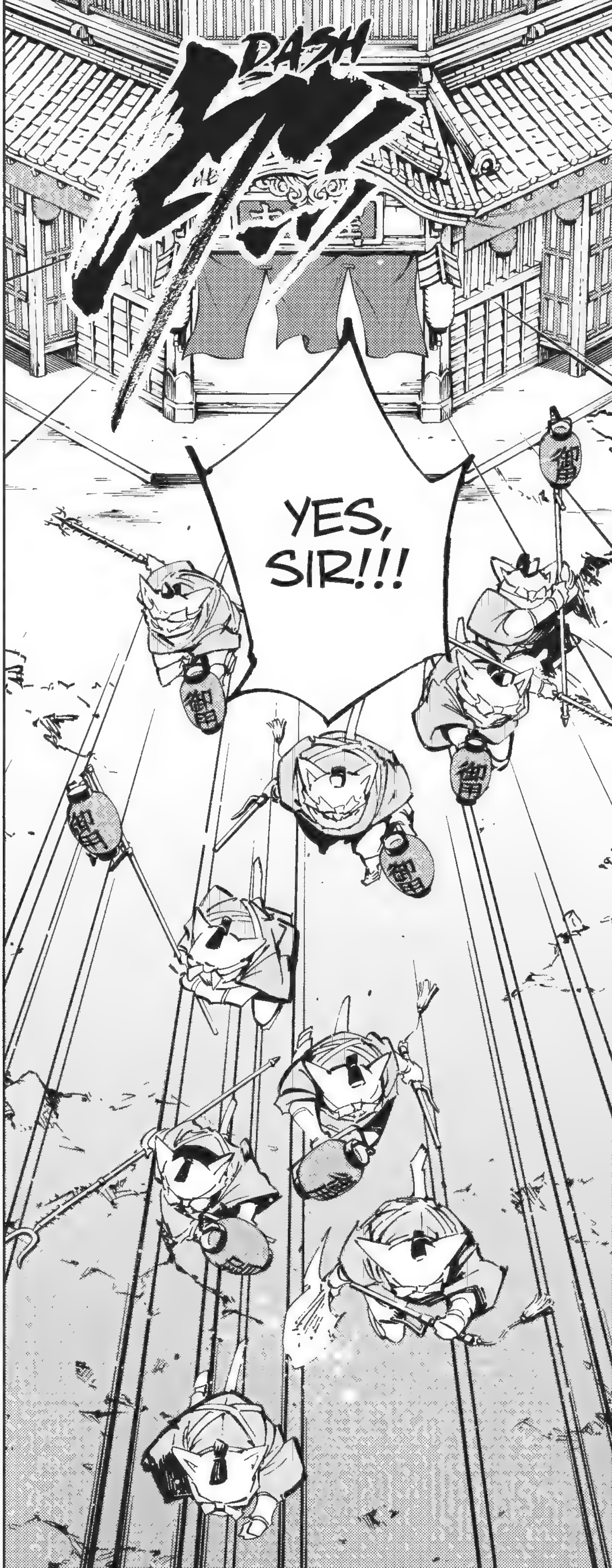

YES, CONSTABLE.
HE WAS A TOM, AND HE STANK TO HIGH HEAVEN.
BUT HE WAS EVEN MORE TERRIFYING THAN HE WAS SMELLY.
I COULDN'T HAVE HIM STAY HERE...SO I JUST GAVE HIM THE SWORD AND DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT HIS FACE.
SIGH... WELL, YOU PROBABLY MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
IF YOU'D GIVEN HIM ANY TROUBLE, YOU COULD'VE BEEN SKEWERED, TOO.
EEP!
I'M NOT TRYING TO THREATEN YOU.
I KNOW HIM WELL.

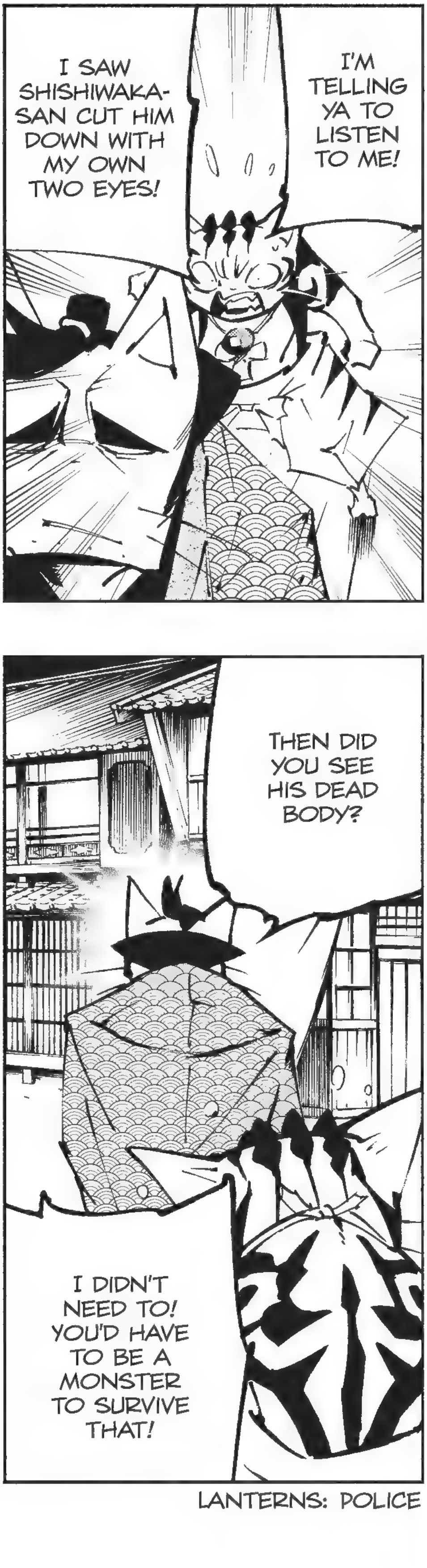

BECAUSE, AS A MEMBER OF THE SECRET POLICE...
...I, SHIRIYA ABYHEI...
猫相書き
Wanted Feline
...HAVE BEEN AFTER THE TOM ON THIS POSTER FOR QUITE SOME TIME.


NO, NO, NO, NO.
HOLD UP, POPS. WE KILLED THAT GUY DAYS AGO.
SECRET POLICE ...?
ギッ GLARE
ドキッ B-DMP
I'M NOT GONNA ASK WHAT A PUNK KITTEN LIKE YOU IS DOING IN A JOINT LIKE THIS.
EEP?!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU CATS DID, BUT ANYWAY, THIS GUY IS TOUGH AS SISAL.
ざわ MUR-MUR
AND HE'LL DO WHATEVER DIRTY DEED HE HAS TO TO GET WHAT HE WANTS.
ざわ MUR-MUR
ざわ MUR-MUR

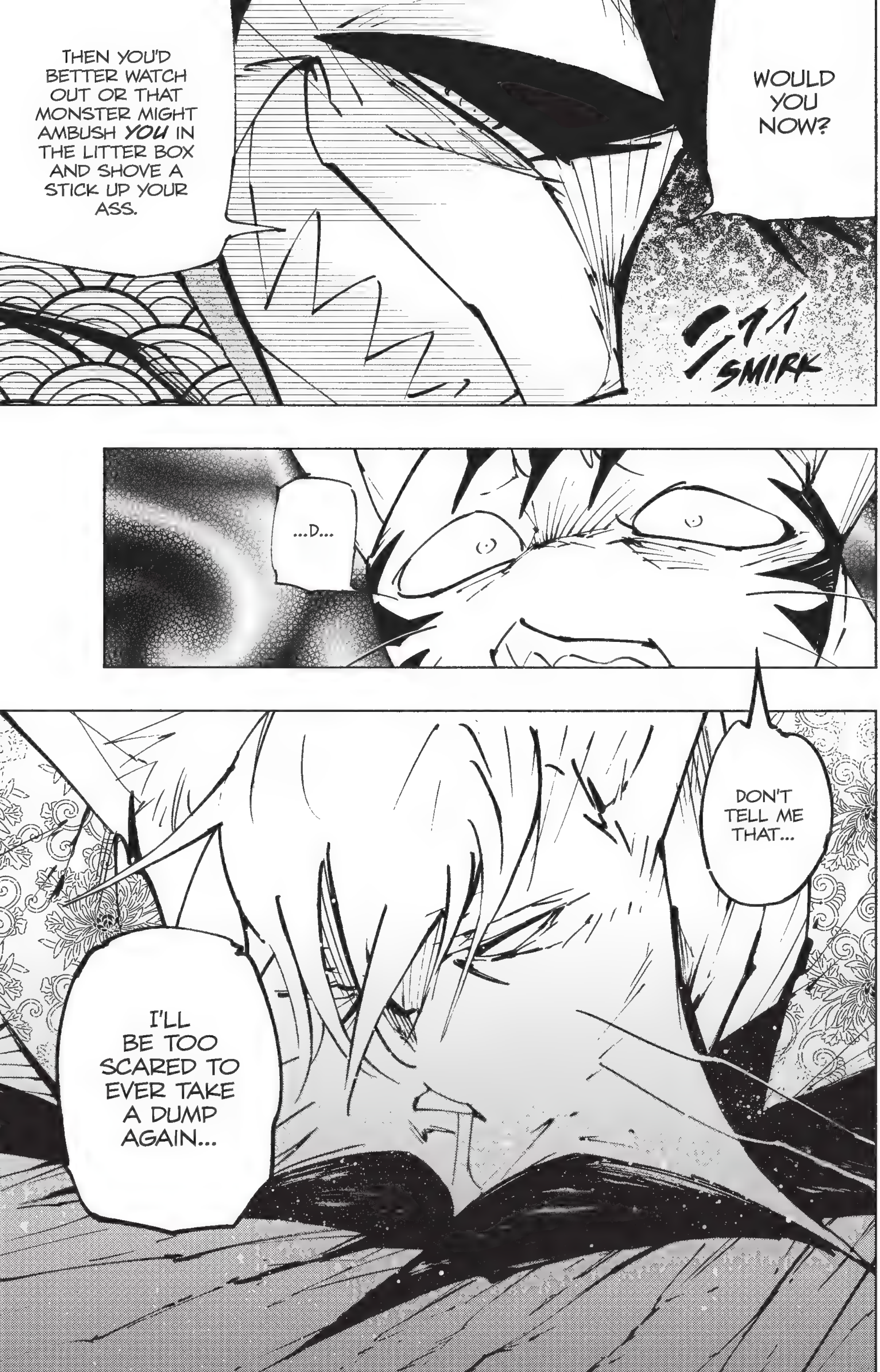

FOR EXAMPLE ...
...IN WHAT WORLD WOULD YOU EVER FIND A CAT WHO WOULD HIDE IN THE KITTY LITTER AT THE LAVATORY, JUST TO STAB A GUY IN THE ASS?
THERE'S ONLY ONE CAT I KNOW WHO COULD PULL OFF A STUNT LIKE THAT.
AND IT'S THAT PIECE OF CRAP TOM.

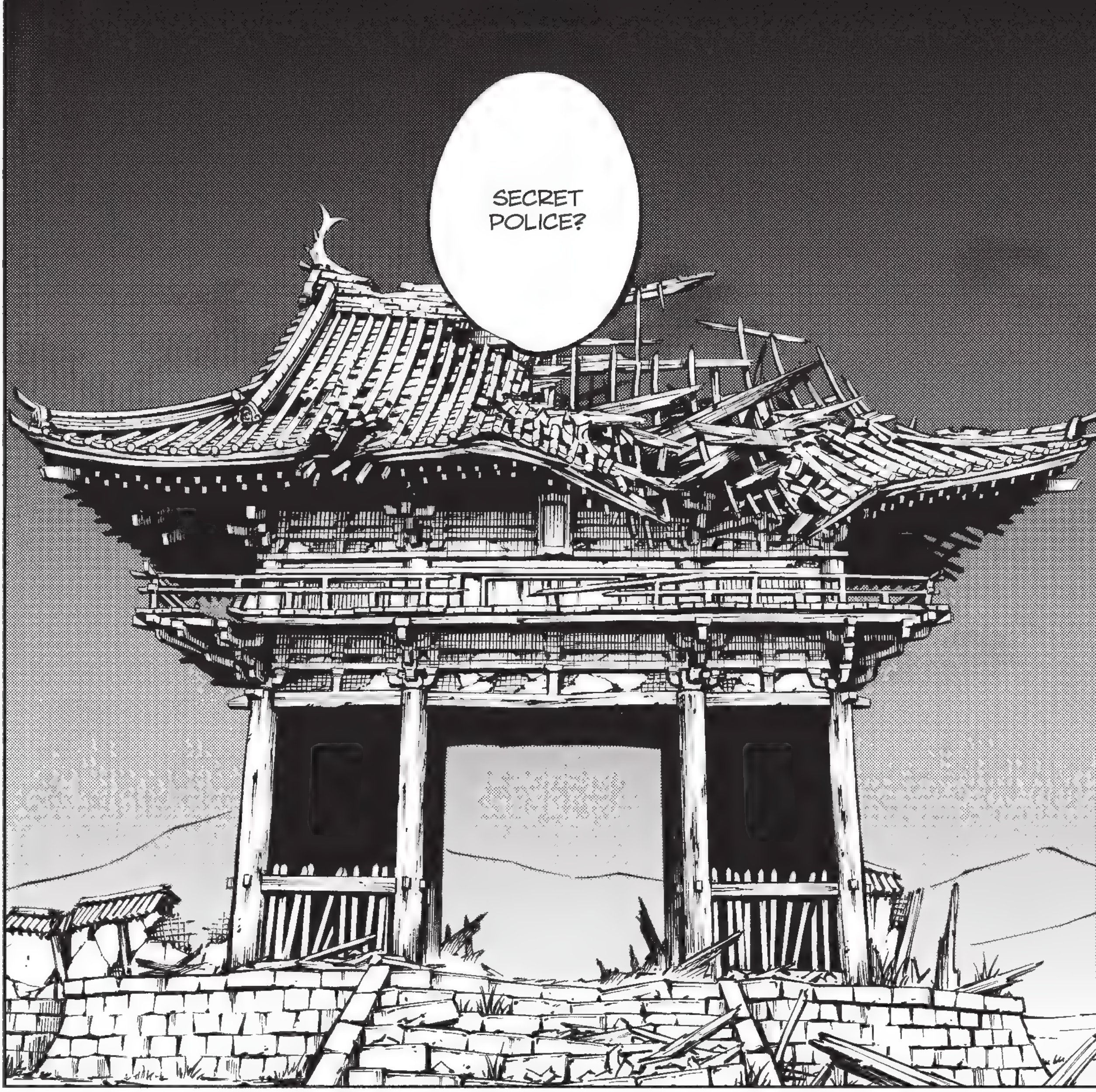

BUT COME ON!
HE HAD A GAPING WOUND IN HIS BACK!
ZSH
ALL RIGHT. HE COULDN'T HAVE GONE FAR.
SPLIT UP AND SET UP A PERIMETER AS FAR AS THE RIDGE.
YES, SIR!
IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, BUT CALL AS MUCH BACKUP AS YOU CAN.
DON'T WASTE TIME GETTING A HOLD OF THE CHECKING STATIONS. THAT MOG HAS NO USE FOR MAJOR ROADS.
YES, SIR!
AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT DRAW YOUR SWORDS.
THAT IS, OF COURSE, UNLESS YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH... HE DOESN'T GIVE A CRAP ABOUT FELINE LIFE.

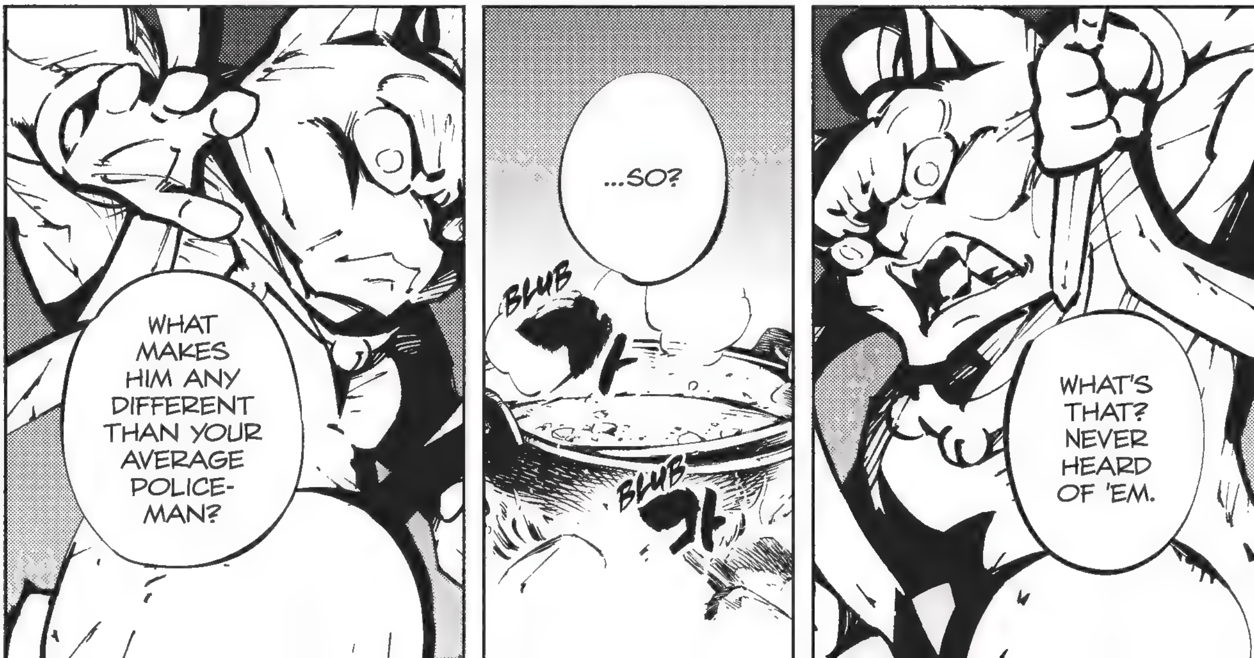

DASH
YES, SIR!!!

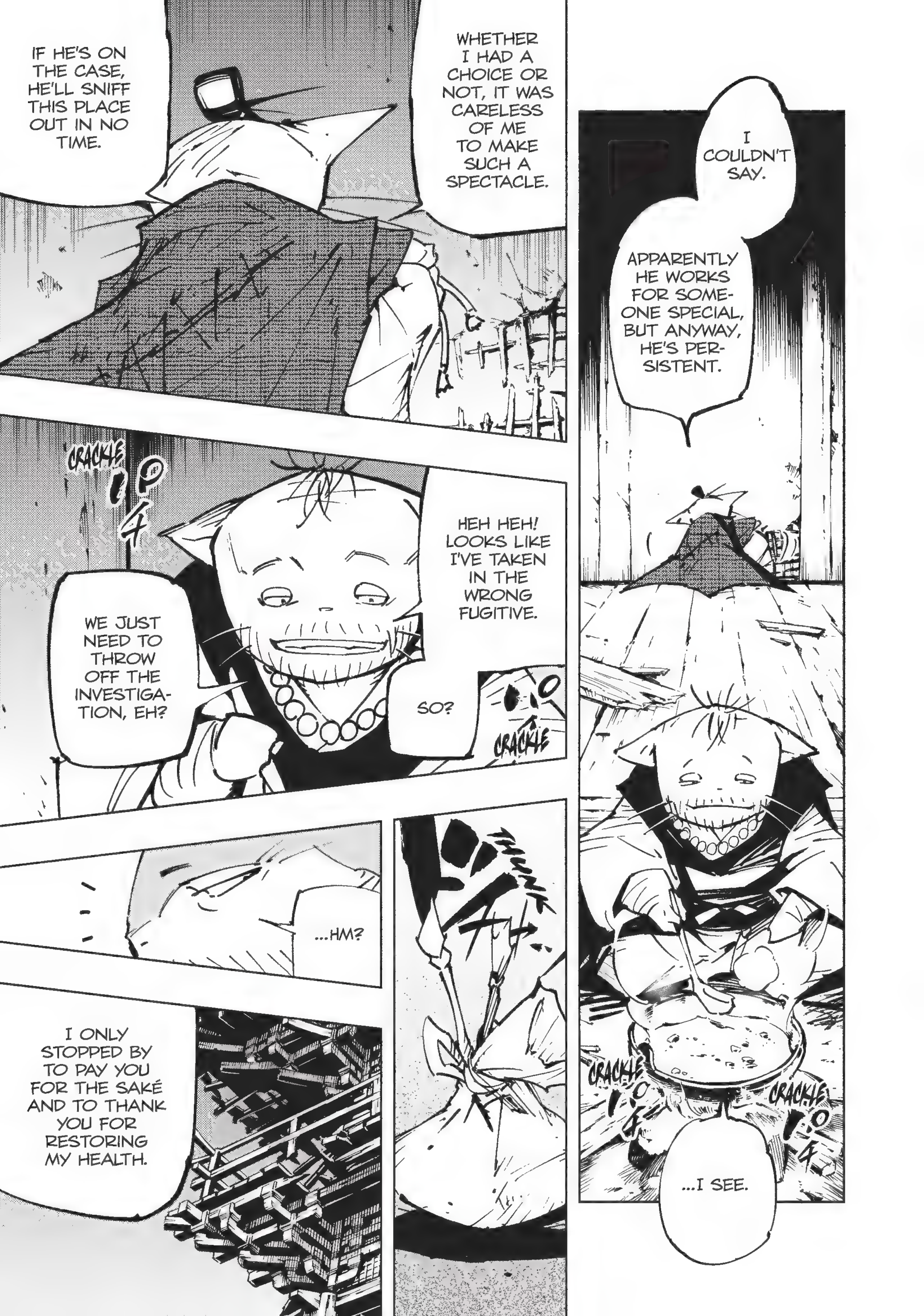

I'M TELLING YA TO LISTEN TO ME!
I SAW SHISHIWAKA-SAN CUT HIM DOWN WITH MY OWN TWO EYES!
THEN DID YOU SEE HIS DEAD BODY?
I DIDN'T NEED TO! YOU'D HAVE TO BE A MONSTER TO SURVIVE THAT!

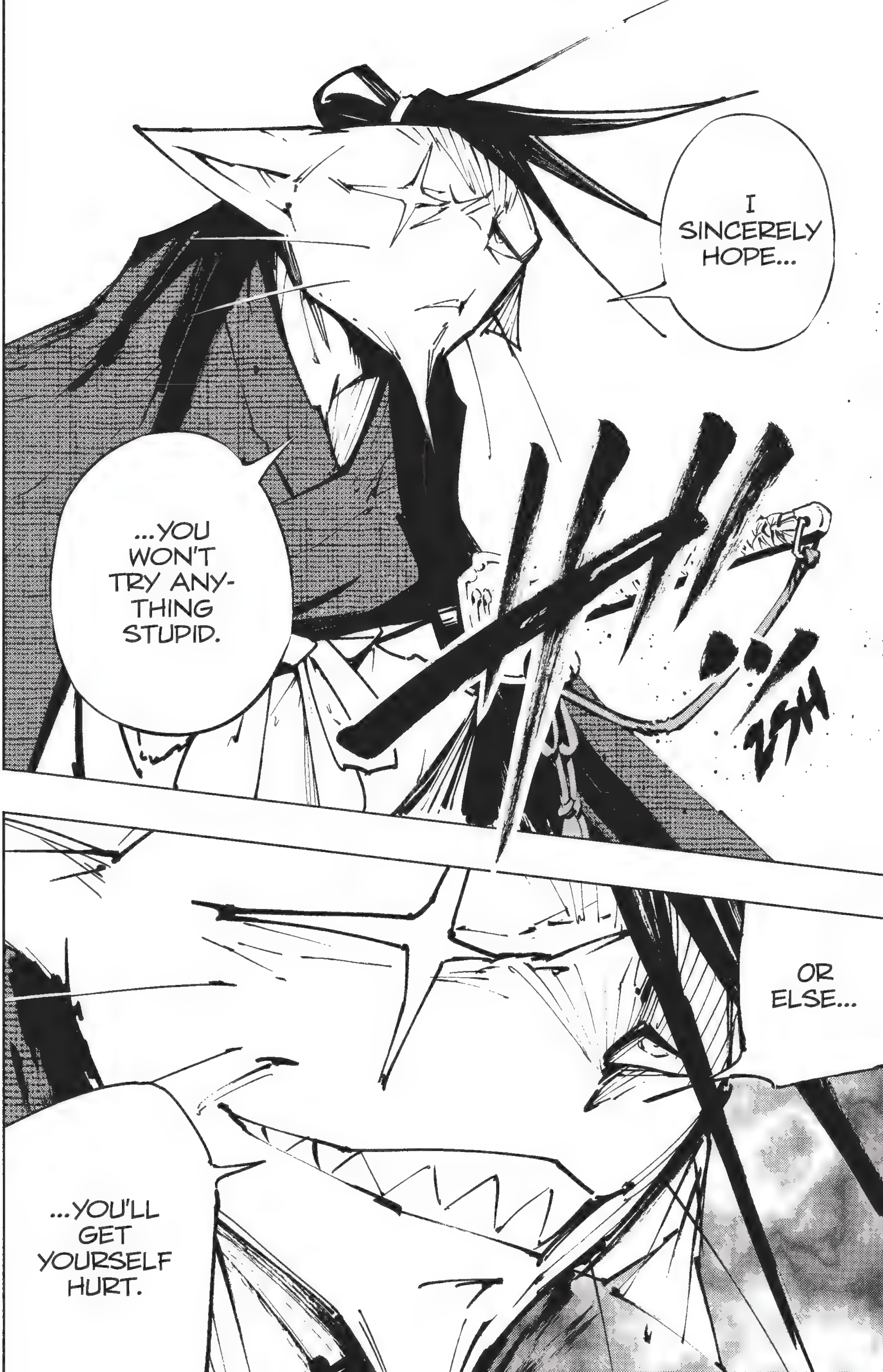
LANTERNS: POLICE

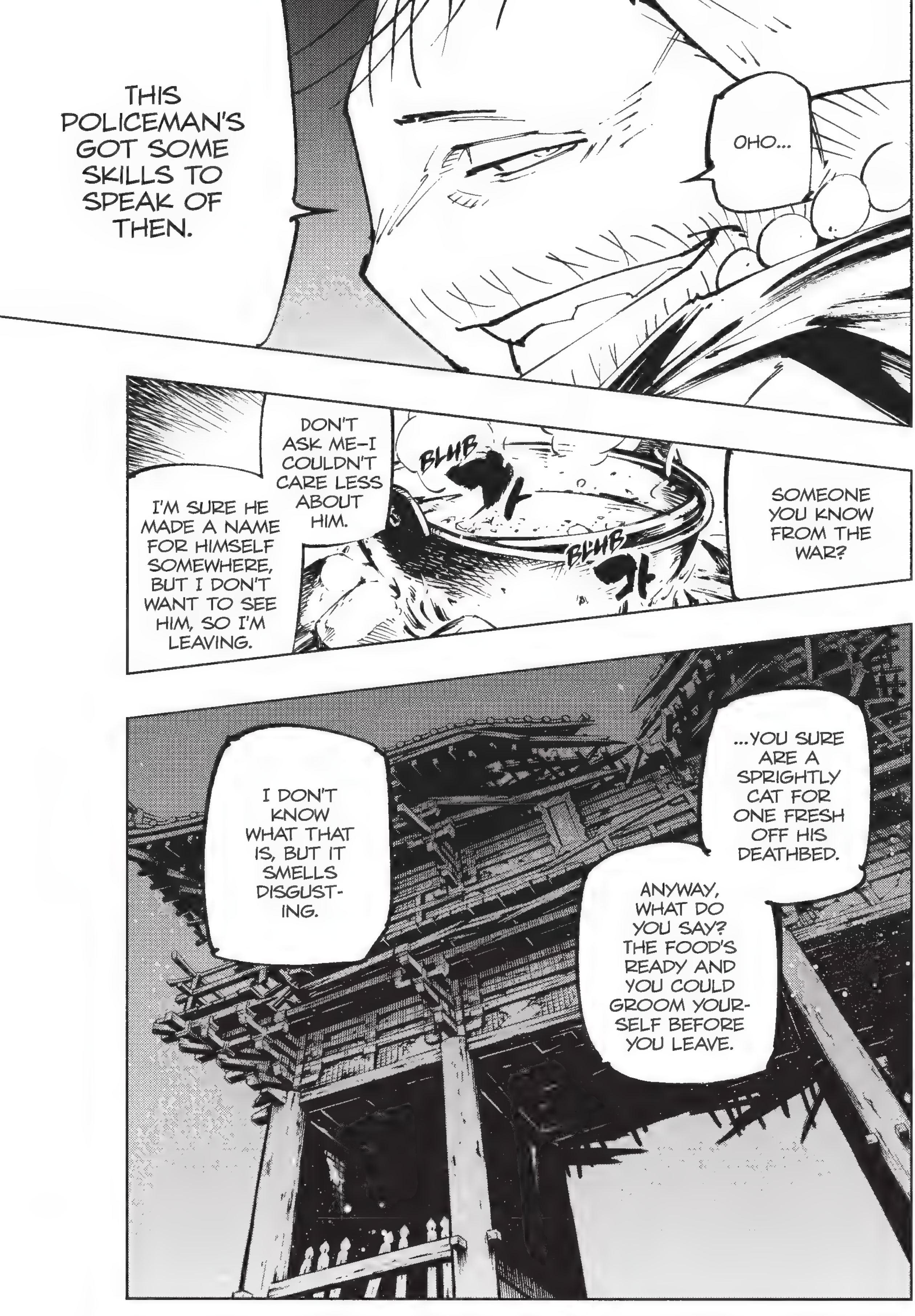

WOULD YOU NOW?
THEN YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT OR THAT MONSTER MIGHT AMBUSH *YOU* IN THE LITTER BOX AND SHOVE A STICK UP YOUR ASS.
SMIRK
...D...
DON'T TELL ME THAT...
I'LL BE TOO SCARED TO EVER TAKE A DUMP AGAIN...

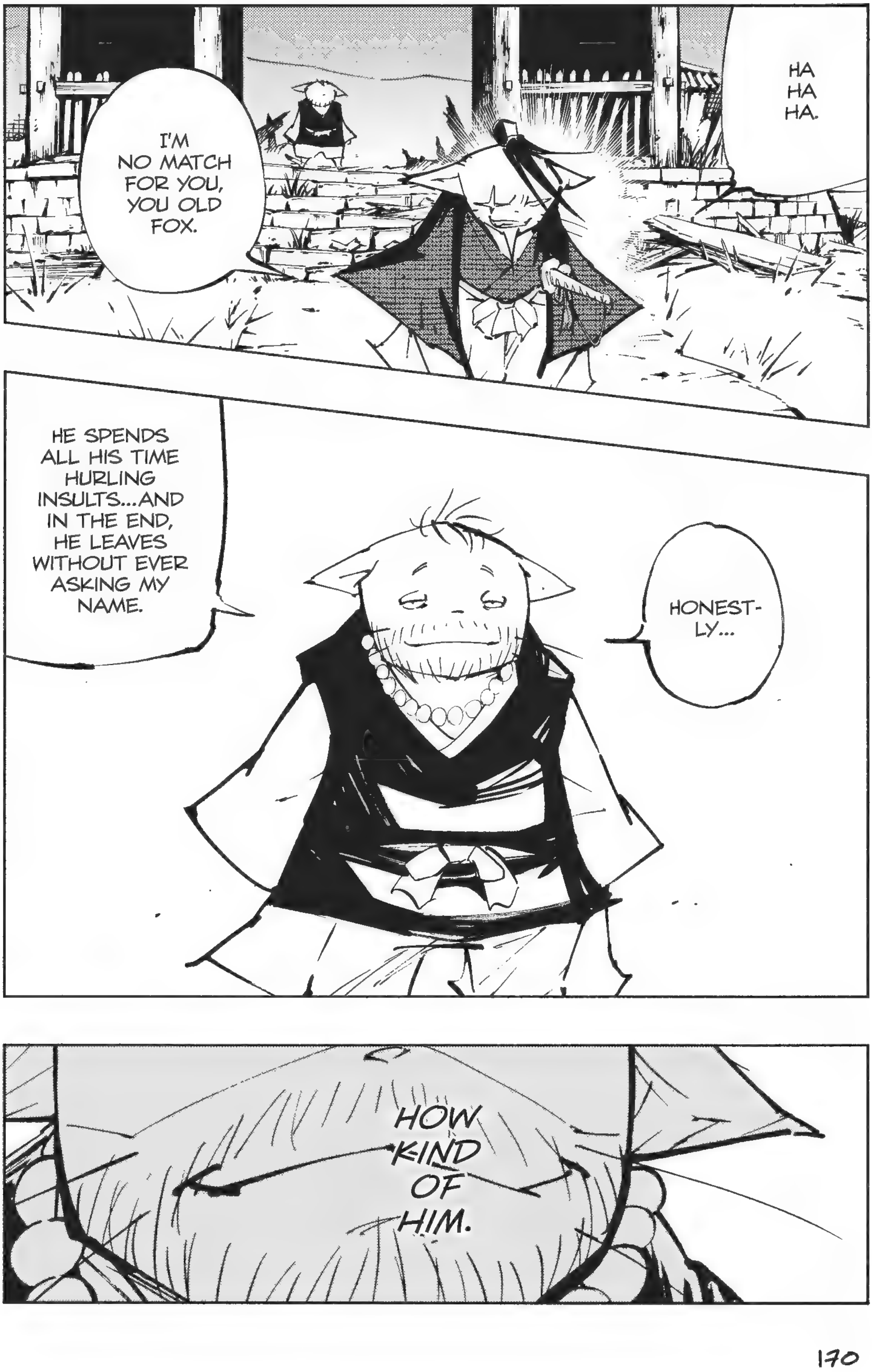

SECRET POLICE?

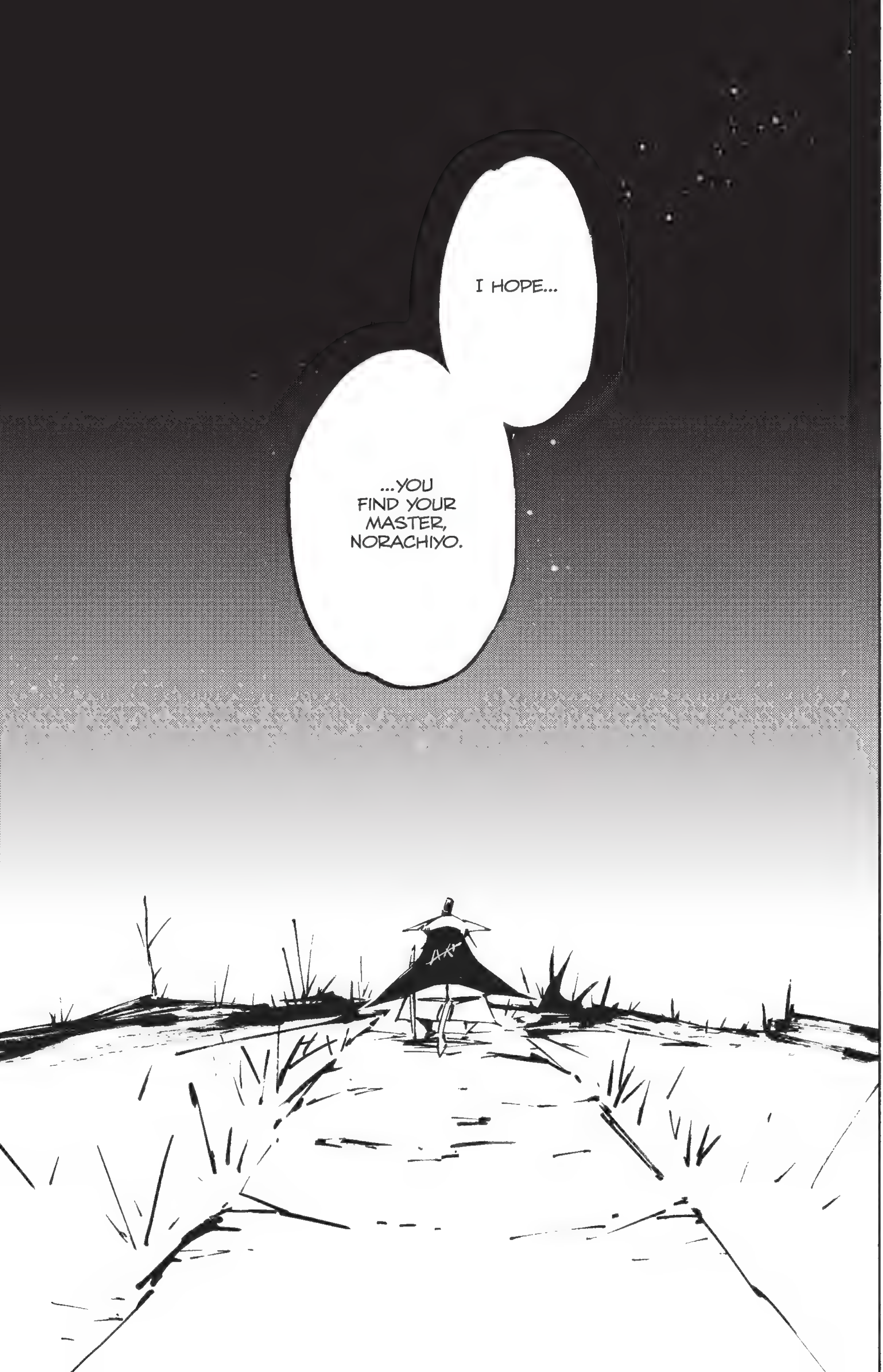

WHAT'S THAT? NEVER HEARD OF 'EM.
...SO?
BLUB
BLUB
WHAT MAKES HIM ANY DIFFERENT THAN YOUR AVERAGE POLICEMAN?

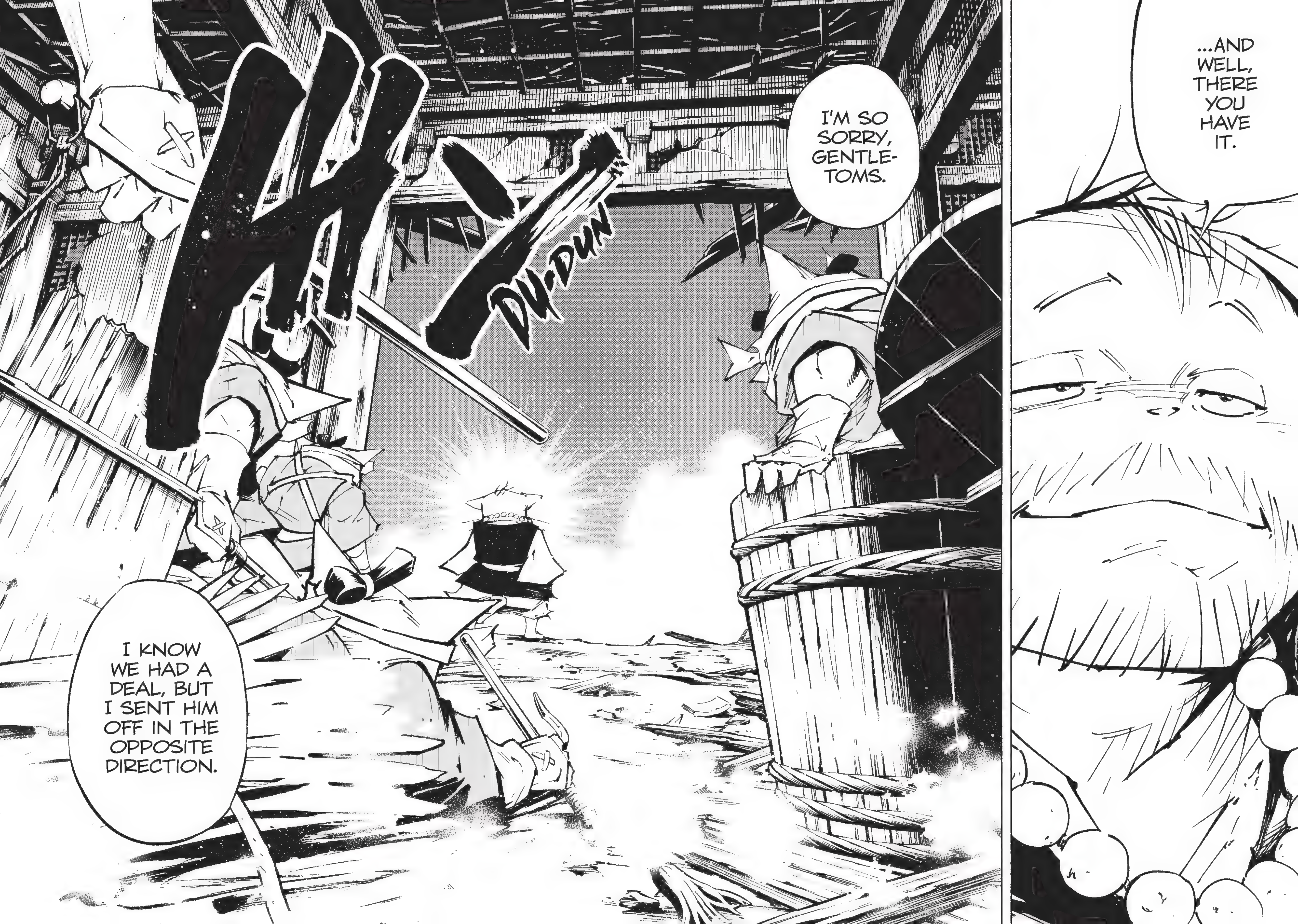

I COULDN'T SAY.
APPARENTLY HE WORKS FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL, BUT ANYWAY, HE'S PERSISTENT.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
...I SEE.
WHETHER I HAD A CHOICE OR NOT, IT WAS CARELESS OF ME TO MAKE SUCH A SPECTACLE.
IF HE'S ON THE CASE, HE'LL SNIFF THIS PLACE OUT IN NO TIME.
HEH HEH! LOOKS LIKE I'VE TAKEN IN THE WRONG FUGITIVE.
SO?
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
POP
WE JUST NEED TO THROW OFF THE INVESTIGATION, EH?
THUNK
...HM?
I ONLY STOPPED BY TO PAY YOU FOR THE SAKÉ AND TO THANK YOU FOR RESTORING MY HEALTH.

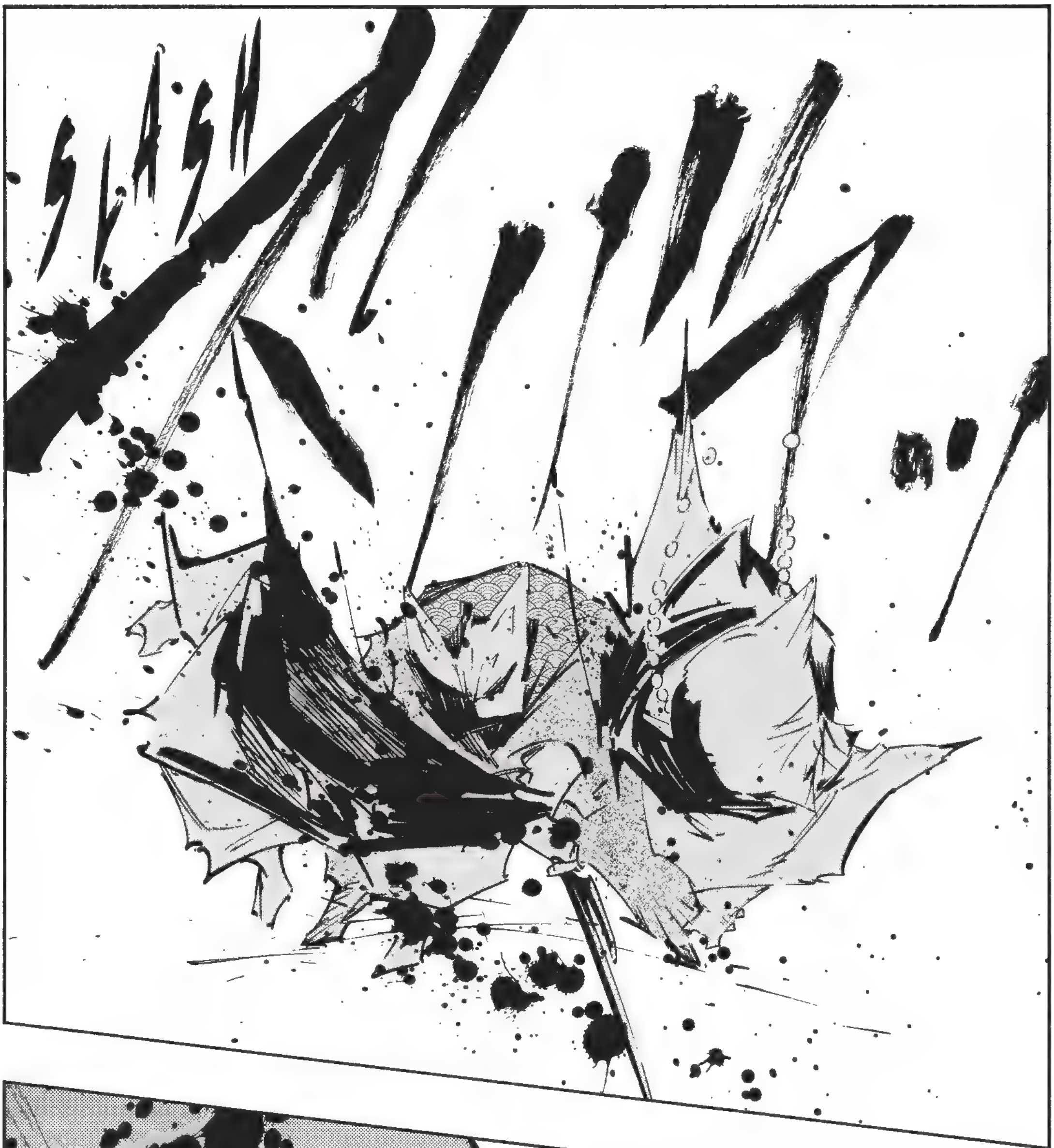

I SINCERELY HOPE...
...YOU WON'T TRY ANYTHING STUPID.
ZSH
OR ELSE...
...YOU'LL GET YOURSELF HURT.

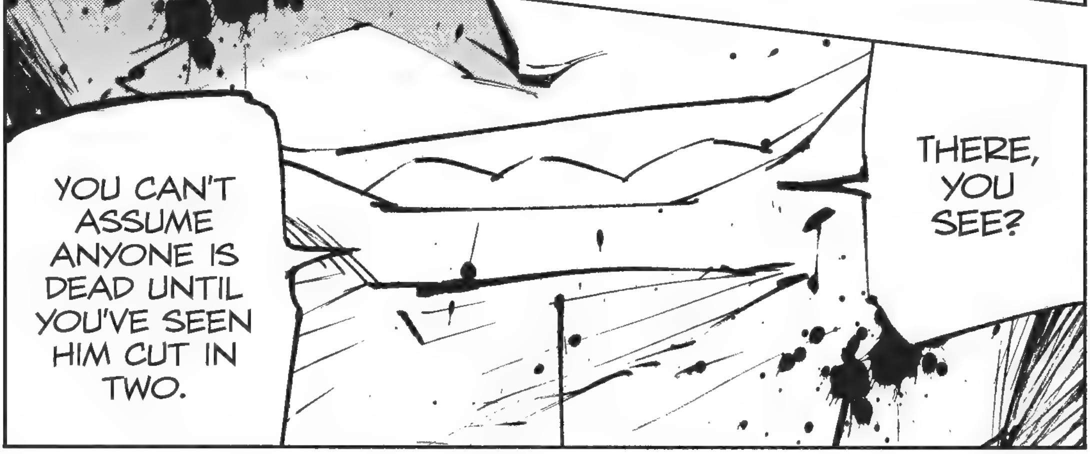

OHO...
THIS POLICEMAN'S GOT SOME SKILLS TO SPEAK OF THEN.
SOMEONE YOU KNOW FROM THE WAR?
BLUB
BLUB
DON'T ASK ME—I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT HIM.
I'M SURE HE MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF SOMEWHERE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE HIM, SO I'M LEAVING.
...YOU SURE ARE A SPRIGHTLY CAT FOR ONE FRESH OFF HIS DEATHBED.
ANYWAY, WHAT DO YOU SAY? THE FOOD'S READY AND YOU COULD GROOM YOURSELF BEFORE YOU LEAVE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS, BUT IT SMELLS DISGUSTING.

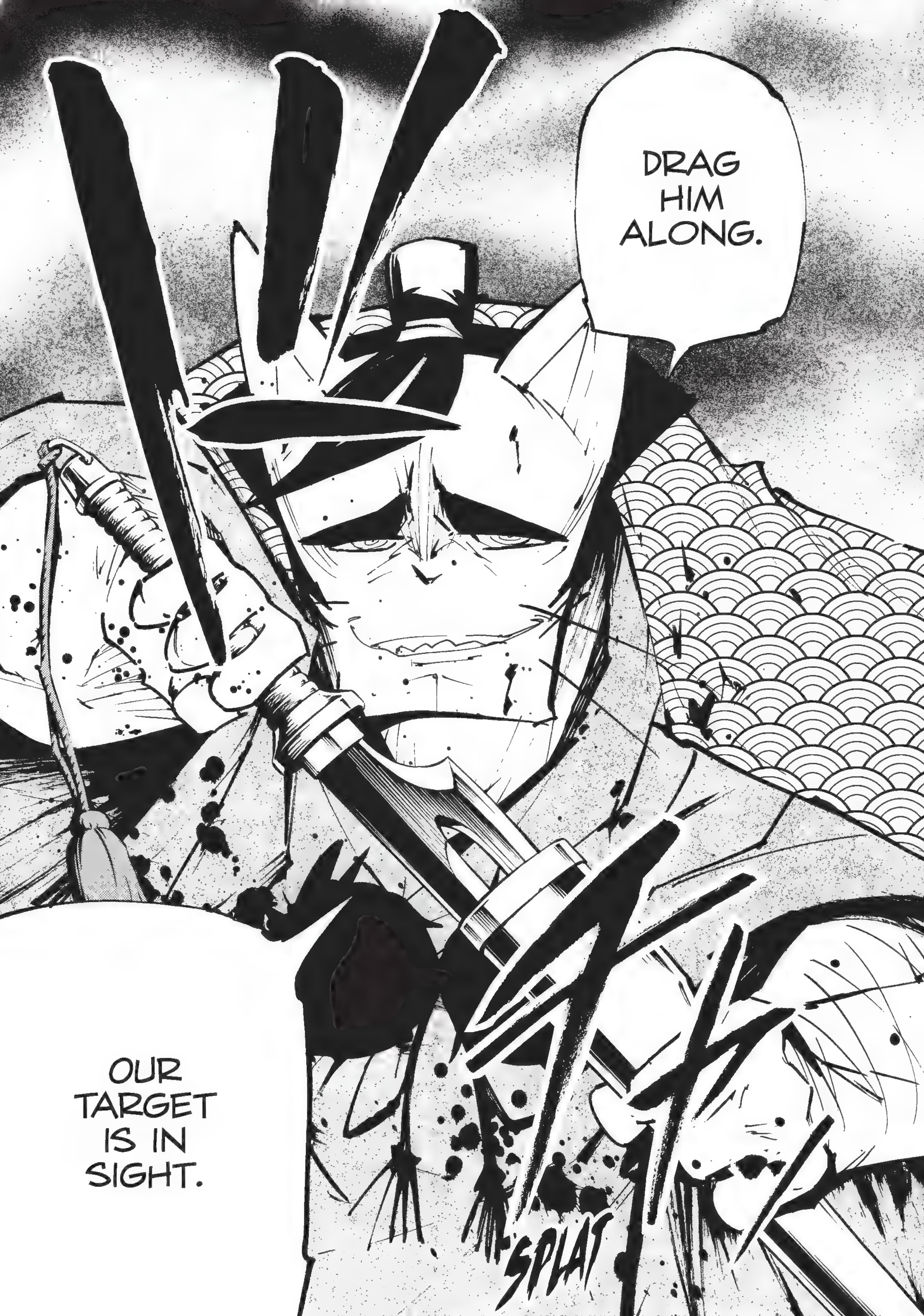

HA HA HA.
I'M NO MATCH FOR YOU, YOU OLD FOX.
HONESTLY...
HE SPENDS ALL HIS TIME HURLING INSULTS...AND IN THE END, HE LEAVES WITHOUT EVER ASKING MY NAME.
HOW KIND OF HIM.

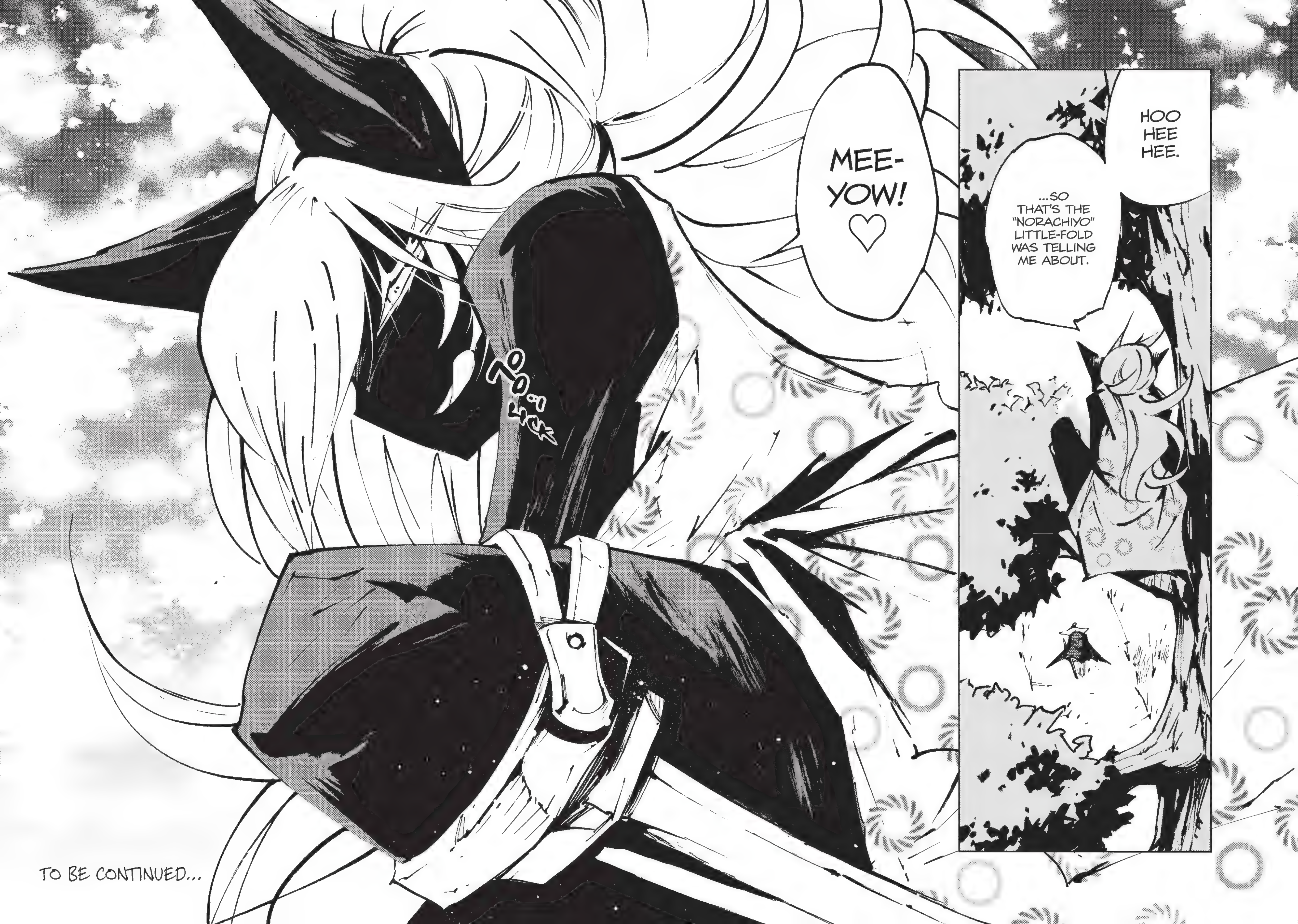

I HOPE...
...YOU FIND YOUR MASTER, NORACHIYO.


...AND WELL, THERE YOU HAVE IT.
I'M SO SORRY, GENTLE-TOMS.
DU-DUN
I KNOW WE HAD A DEAL, BUT I SENT HIM OFF IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.


SLASH


THERE, YOU SEE?
YOU CAN'T ASSUME ANYONE IS DEAD UNTIL YOU'VE SEEN HIM CUT IN TWO.


DRAG HIM ALONG.
OUR TARGET IS IN SIGHT.
SPLAT


HOO HEE HEE.
...SO THAT'S THE "NORACHIYO" LITTLE-FOLD WAS TELLING ME ABOUT.
MEE-YOW! ♡
ペロ
LICK

TO BE CONTINUED...

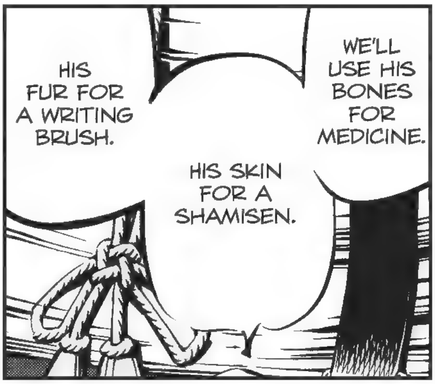
TRANSLATION NOTES

A *prrrayer* for your souls, page 5

Norachiyo recites a shortened version of a Buddhist chant that means, “I trust all to Amitabha.” Amitabha is the principal Buddha in the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism, and in this case, Norachiyo is commending the souls of his victims to him. As a cat, Norachiyo pronounces the prayer with a bit of a feline accent.

Skin for a shamisen, page 13

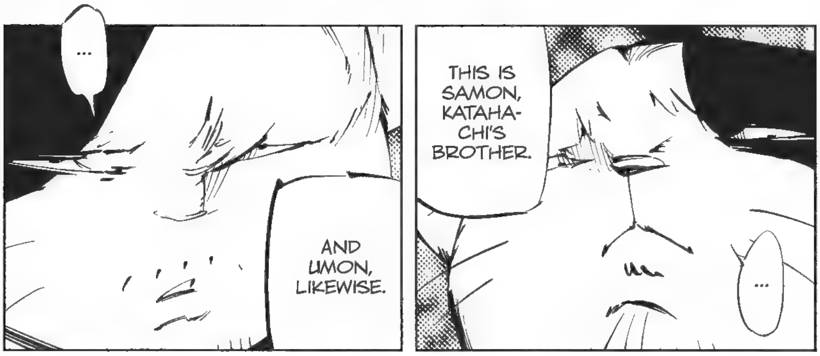
A shamisen is a Japanese musical instrument, something like a banjo with three strings. The body of the instrument (the round part) is covered on both sides with skin. As the reader can guess, often cat skin is the type of skin used.


WE'LL USE HIS BONES FOR MEDICINE.
HIS SKIN FOR A SHAMISEN.
HIS FUR FOR A WRITING BRUSH.

Norachiyo, page 21

The name Norachiyo is what is called a *yōmyō*, or childhood name. In Norachiyo's day, it was not uncommon for nobles and warriors to be given a childhood name at birth, which would later be changed at their coming of age ceremony. The *-chiyo* ending was common for childhood names, and in fact the great shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu was called Takechiyo when he was a boy. That being the case, there wouldn't have been many grown men or cats who still had -chiyo in their names.

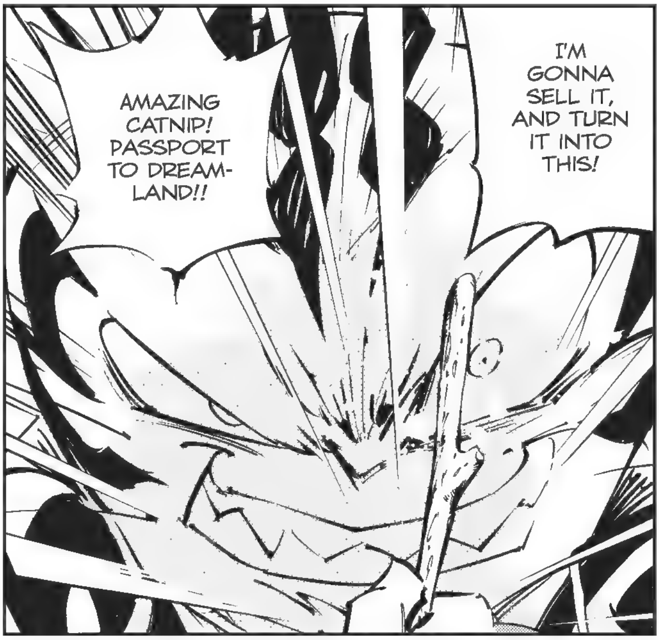
L&R Brothers, page 38


THIS IS SAMON, KATAHACHI'S BROTHER.
...
AND UMON, LIKEWISE.
...

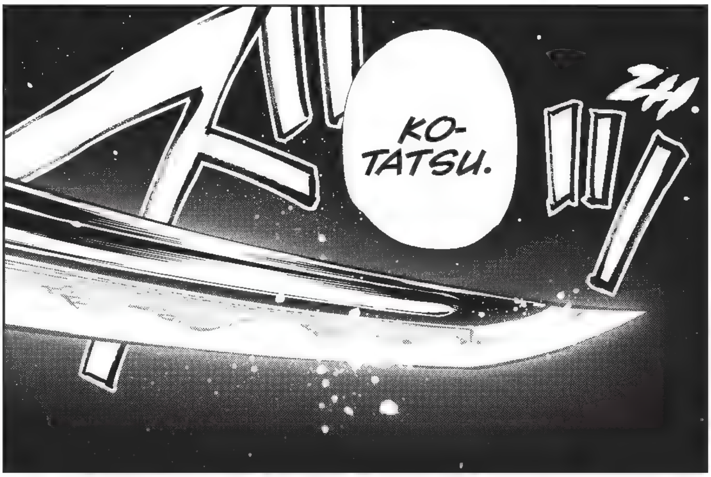
The names Samon and Umon mean, roughly, “the one on the left” and “the one on the right,” respectively. They may have been named after their markings, as Samon has a dark patch over his left eye, and Umon has one over the right. Together, they are the Left & Right, or L&R Brothers.

Passport to dreamland, page 61

In describing his ideal product, Short literally says, “Good catnip, feels like a dream,” which is a play on the title of a Japanese travel show called “Ii Tabi, Yume Kibun”. The pun is that the word for “catnip” (*matatabi*) is similar to the word for “travel” (*tabi*). The translators used plays on the names of shows from America's Travel Channel, retaining the “dream” aspect, as it is somewhat important to the theme of this chapter.


I'M GONNA SELL IT, AND TURN IT INTO THIS!
AMAZING CATNIP! PASSPORT TO DREAM-LAND!!

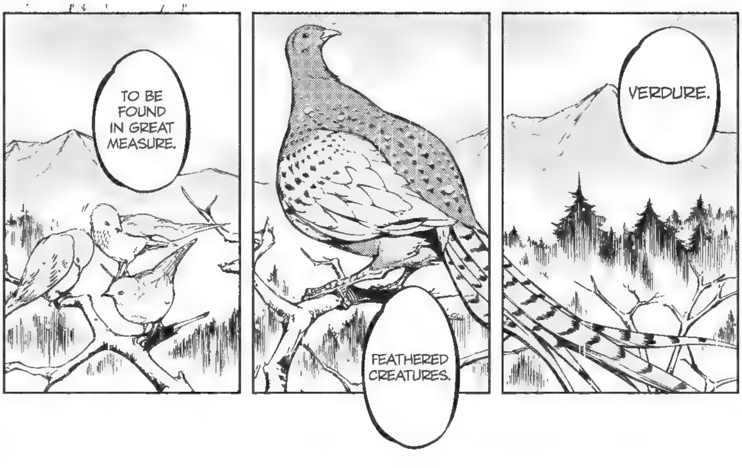
Kotatsu, page 71


ZAH
KO-TATSU.

The characters in the name of Norachiyo's sword mean “tiger” and “foot warmer.” The word *kotatsu* usually refers to a table with a heater under it and a blanket around the edges to keep the warmth from escaping—a very popular item in the winter, especially among household cats. By changing the first kanji character to one meaning “tiger,” the sword's name may be referring to the fact that a feline friend can also be an effective foot warmer.

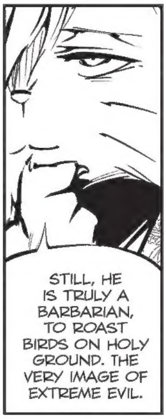
In great measure, page 89

In the original Japanese, Norachiyo waxes poetic, listing the blessings of his surroundings using only words ending in *-dori*: *amayadori* (shelter from the rain), *midori* (greenery), *yamadori* (mountain bird, specifically the copper pheasant), and *yoridori midori* (rich variety). The translators attempted to replicate the effect with almost-rhymes.


VERDURE.
FEATHERED CREATURES.
TO BE FOUND IN GREAT MEASURE.

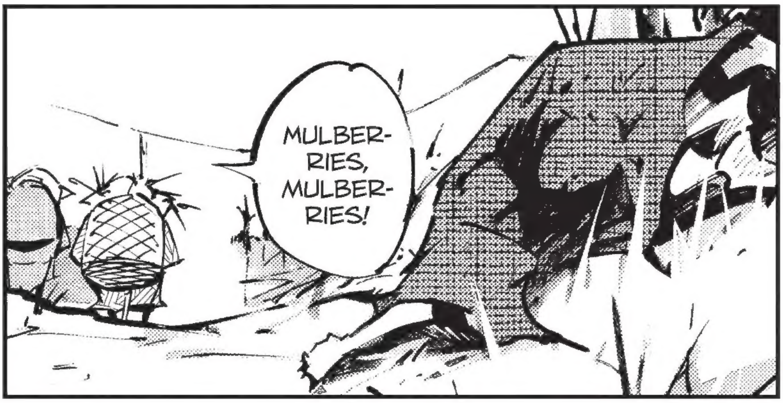
Cooking birds on holy ground, page 93

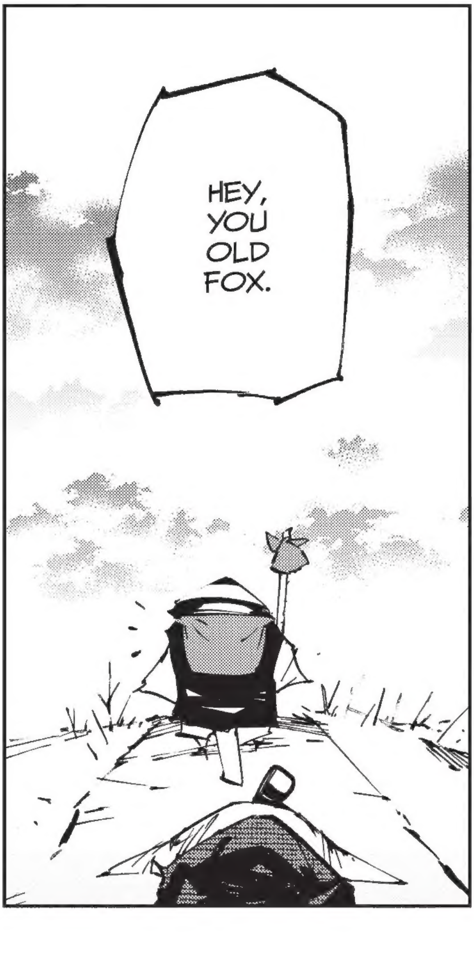
The bell at Norachiyo's hideout is a *bonshō*, and it tells us that this location is a Buddhist temple. Buddhism is a non-killing religion, and some schools forbid even the killing of an insect. That being the case, killing and eating a bird on temple grounds, even by a non-Buddhist, would be a sign of great disrespect.


STILL, HE IS TRULY A BARBARIAN, TO ROAST BIRDS ON HOLY GROUND. THE VERY IMAGE OF EXTREME EVIL.

Mulberries, page 134

In Japanese, the phrase "*kuwabara, kuwabara,*" or "mulberry field, mulberry field," is used much like the English phrase "knock on wood" to ward off bad luck. Although it is used to ward off all kinds of bad luck, it originated as a way to avoid getting struck by lightning. In this case, however, it is used to ward off any bad luck that may be foreshadowed (or caused) by coming into close proximity with a dead body.


MULBERRIES, MULBERRIES!


HEY, YOU OLD FOX.

You old fox, page 143

Technically, Norachiyo calls this monk a *tanuki*, which is a raccoon dog native to Japan. Tanuki are known for being cunning and deceptive, similar to how we in the West see foxes. Either way, this priest reminds Norachiyo of a crafty animal that is not a cat.

The great civil war, page 138

In the middle ages, Japan went through a long period of civil unrest, known as the Sengoku Era, or Era of Civil War, during which warlords were constantly fighting for supremacy. One of the major events that brought this era to an end was the Battle of Sekigahara, from which this series gets its name.

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Nekogahara 1

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